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# Catholic Schools and Student Academic Performance; Does the Urban Catholic School Experience Mitigate Ethnoracial Disparity?

Lanny K. (Lanny Keith) Hollis  
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CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE:  
DOES THE URBAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL EXPERIENCE MITIGATE  
ETHNORACIAL DISPARITY?

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN URBAN EDUCATION:

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CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

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This dissertation has been approved for  
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## DEDICATION

With love . . .

☞ For my parents:

- Samuel Edward Hollis, Sr. (1907-1982)
- Maxine Hazel Carey Monnette Hollis (1920-2005)

☞ For my family, especially my brothers and sisters:

- Elizabeth (“Betty Ann”) Witt (1941-2003)
- Ruth Ann Nichols Hollis (1944 -1977)
- Samuel Edward Hollis, Jr. (1947-1986)
- Mary Catherine (“Cookie”) Grodi Gillespie
- David Freeman Hollis

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- St. Mary’s Grade School, Toledo, Ohio, especially the Sisters of Notre Dame
- Holy Spirit Seminary High School, Toledo, Ohio, especially *el reverendo padre y maestro* Ronald LeJeune and Dr. Lawrence Montford
- The schools of the Benedictine monks from St. Meinrad Archabbey, St. Meinrad, Indiana, especially J. Terrence Lyden
- Erieview Catholic High School, Cleveland, Ohio, especially the Sisters of the Humility of Mary
- Cleveland Central Catholic High School, Cleveland, Ohio

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- Rev. Joseph Gembala, Jr., Esq.
- Dr. Timothy Huth
- The Joseph E. Prekop, Esq. Family: Joseph, Linda, Theodore (“Teddy”), & Hillary
- El pueblo hispano

☞ For my brothers and sisters in dis/ability, especially those who struggle with written language. May our experience of struggle, trial, and pain perfect us like “gold in the furnace” of life (cf. Sirach 2:5ff). To paraphrase Booker T. Washington, may we remember that success is not to be measured so much by what we have achieved in life as by the obstacles we have overcome in its pursuit.

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## PRESCRIPT

There is much truth to the old adage: What we see depends on where we stand. Moreover, where we stand depends on the path we have trod prior to arriving at that point of observation. As a researcher, what I see has an experiential and epistemological basis in my lived academic and personal history. My investigation of Catholic education must take into account and disclose my own journey to and within Catholic academia. We see through the lenses of our experiences and build meaning through our social history and world outlook (cf. *Weltanschauung*). Validity, attempts at investigatory objectivity, and research integrity can only be possible once researchers have analyzed their subjective reality and experiential discourses. This is my goal in this prescript: to narrate my background and experience so as to control them.

My education began in 1963 with first grade in a small rural town in Southern Tennessee, where my father's family had lived since shortly after the Revolutionary War. I attended a small segregated public school for White students.<sup>1</sup> My Baptist carpenter father met my northern Catholic mother in Toledo, Ohio, where he was working in a repeating pattern of economic migrations between Tennessee and Ohio. After first grade, our family migrated for the last time<sup>2</sup> to Toledo, where I attended a northern integrated public school for the first time. In 1968, my family moved to a

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<sup>1</sup> *De facto* racial integration did not come to southern rural Tennessee until about 1970 (see Mauney, 1982).

<sup>2</sup> My family's pattern of movement between Tennessee and Ohio was part of the White Southern Diaspora, which coincided and was very similar to the Great Migration of African Americans from the South to the Industrial Midwest (see Gregory, 2005). Accordingly, my family participated in a larger regional migration of laborers and their families traveling between the Southern Appalachia Mountains in Tennessee and Kentucky to places like Toledo, Ohio, and Detroit, Michigan. The main thoroughfare was Interstate Highway 75, known somewhat pejoratively as the "Hillbilly Highway" (cf. Lynn & Vecsey, 1976, p. 25). Interstate Highway 77 served a similar function between rural West Virginia and Cleveland, Ohio.

racially diverse neighborhood, and my parents decided that I should attend my mother's former elementary school: St. Mary's Grade School. My father never actually realized how multicultural it was. I still remember that August morning, the 8:00 A.M. daily school mass, and my awe at the students who recited long prayers from memory. After mass, I was registered and began fifth grade. Shortly after beginning my attendance at St. Mary's, my natural curiosity in religion classes, the desire of my mother to share her faith, and the good Jesuit fathers culminated in Baptism and First Communion in December. The following year, I received Confirmation with James Campos<sup>3</sup> serving as my godfather.

I graduated from St. Mary's in 1972 and went on to Holy Spirit High School Seminary in Toledo, where I graduated in 1976. That accomplishment marked me as the first male in my family<sup>4</sup> to graduate from high school. Accordingly, that same year, I accomplished another family first by enrolling at a university. I attended a Benedictine seminary in Southern Indiana: St. Meinrad College. In 1980, I received a bachelor's degree in psychology with minors in theology, history, philosophy, and Spanish. After graduating, I worked for two years as a rehabilitation counselor in Toledo and in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1982, however, I returned to seminary studies at St. Meinrad Archabbey. I enrolled in a joint-degree program between St. Meinrad School of Theology and Indiana University, which culminated in joint-master's degrees in Catholic theology and religious studies, respectively.

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<sup>3</sup> James Campos was the father of a classmate, the first permanent deacon in Ohio, and a Mexican-American. This special godson relationship (*ahijadísimo*) offered me a quasi-familiar affiliation with his family that would be the impetus for lifelong Spanish-language and culture study.

<sup>4</sup> Actually, I was the second male in my family to graduate from grade school. My older brothers discontinued education in the seventh and eleventh grades. Neither ever attended Catholic schools.

In 1986, I again left seminary training and returned to work briefly as a rehabilitation counselor before beginning a career in the diocesan high schools of Cleveland the following year. In the 22 years that followed, I have been a religion, social studies, Latin, and Spanish teacher; campus minister; theology department chairperson, social studies department chairperson; second language department chairperson; academic dean; vice principal and assistant principal; admissions director; and disciplinarian in single-sex and coeducational Catholic inner-city high schools. Six years ago now, I began the doctoral program at Cleveland State University. My doctoral studies have been dynamic, and I have explored the theoretical and research areas of dyslexia and second language learning, linguistic and cultural interaction, Hispanic educational issues, Disabilities Studies in education, social and self theory, postmodern theory and philosophy, the achievement gaps, and the place and function of Catholic and urban schools.

At the beginning of this dissertation process, I was counseled to continue my work in the theoretical formation of a dis/ability self, which sprang from my own phonological dyslexia diagnosis and my evolving dis/ability consciousness and liberation. I opted, however, to pursue the other passion of my life: Catholic urban education. As Gould (1996) states, "Life is short, and potential studies are infinite. We have a much better chance of accomplishing something significant when we follow our passionate interests and work in areas of deepest personal meaning" (p. 37). Accordingly, the study of urban Catholic schools is not merely an academic pursuit for me. It is a life's journey. My life reflects the phenomena that I seek to research. Though

I began my Catholic education as a Southern Appalachian, non-Catholic outsider, I found in Catholic schools a home, culture, and faith. Moreover, this religious, intellectual, and educational community mitigated my language-based learning dis/ability in a time before there were “reasonable accommodations.” The social and intellectual support of the Catholic educational community taught me about my God-given capabilities and what was possible with hard work and determination. I seek to understand what I have lived and experienced as a student and as a teacher—that is, the educationally mitigating forces of the Catholic educational community. Through my own experience and enrichment of cultural, social, and academic capital, I have sought to educate others whom society considers different due to wealth, race, language, ethnicity, etc. This is the experience from which I begin my research. Therefore, I attest unabashedly that I am a Catholic-school educator. I am proud of my Catholic education and faith and the service I perform with and for others in Catholic urban schools.

Without question, the vast majority of what and who I am today springs directly from the time, education, expectations, love, work, and relationships I gained at St. Mary’s Grade School, Holy Spirit Seminary High School, St. Meinrad College and School of Theology, Erieview Catholic High School, and Cleveland Central Catholic High School.

I chronicle this history for two reasons: first, to set up a dynamic where I, as researcher, am, at least in part, experientially credentialed to study the Catholic educational phenomenon from the inside (emic); and second, to reveal my biases so not to be unduly influenced. While this research is quantitative, I am informed by my background of qualitative research and Disability Studies and their goals of

emancipatory research, especially in investigating the issues of the achievement gaps between America's cultures. Based on this, I will attempt to examine the data so as to hear the students' voices. Foucault's hegemonic caveat constantly informs me—that is, to be constantly watchful against the “indignity of speaking for others” (Deleuze & Foucault, 1977, p. 209). Therefore, I seek to perform research as a former student and present teacher in urban Catholic institutions and as a competent researcher of the educational phenomena so as to give my students' voices new expression and their experience greater critical freedom.<sup>5</sup> This will be done by concentrating on their feelings and opinions via a formal questionnaire and a series of alumni focus groups.

Accordingly, both sources should inform one another. Using these sources of student voice, I hope to remain faithful to the Disabilities Studies' mantra, “nothing about us without us” (see Charlton, 1998). Resultantly, this study hopes to understand the educational and social experiences of urban Catholic high school students and their socially determined minority or majority status.

Again, within the second reality of research (Lincoln, 1993), I seek to own my inevitable bias so as to control it. Gould (1996) tells us: “We must identify preferences in order to constrain their influences on our work, but we do not go astray when we use such preferences to decide what subjects we wish to pursue” (p. 37). Bias is truly detrimental when it is unconscious and not understood. Moreover, researchers, who

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<sup>5</sup> The emancipatory research literature is very similar to what some educators call action research, but it tends to have a stronger emphasis on leadership and involvement by disabled people, or the group in whose interest the action research is being conducted. Ultimately, emancipatory research is concerned with a Freirian form of praxis, or a conscious effort at social change that brings about equity, social justice, and full participation of all in society and where the work toward that social change is led by those who have, themselves, been oppressed or marginalized.

believe they have no bias deceive themselves and possibly taint their research. A researcher without passion is not a good researcher. Passion biases when it influences, not merely because it is present. Moreover, it is my passionate and personal background that gives me the ability to see more perfectly the kaleidoscope of Catholic education. I am a graduate-level researcher, a product of Catholic urban education, a teacher within an urban Catholic school, and a university theology instructor. These *personae* give me unique venues to see, filter, analyze, and resonate with my students' experience, so we all may learn. Therefore, I have attempted to weave a unique and insightful blend of educational research, historical context, theological understanding, and social dynamic that is the unique experience of Catholic urban education.

In this research, however, I do not seek to write a Catholic educational apologetic. Rather, I hope to move knowledge forward about a possible urban Catholic school effect and the importance of climate and relationships in all schools. Perhaps more importantly, however, I hope to add to the body of knowledge and insight about the most insidious challenge to education in our country: the gap—or better expressed, difference—between the academic performances of students based on their socially determined racial and ethnic demarcations.



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LANNY KEITH HOLLIS

ABSTRACT

This study examined an inner-city Catholic high school to ascertain the possible existence of an achievement gap. Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses examined academic indicators (GPA and Math and Science OGT results) and demographic and school variables. Students (258 Black, 101 White, and 55 Hispanic) completed questionnaires, which were matched with school data and confirmatory alumni focus groups. Analyses revealed no significant differences (ANOVA) among academic indicator means. Correlations were found between academic indicators and length of Catholic education, good behavior, extracurricular participation, high-school-graduation-oriented peers, and teacher caring scores. Regression models found positive student behavior, peers, female gender, extracurricular participation, and teacher caring predicted higher academic scores. Traditional achievement gap indicators (race, ethnicity, family wealth, parent education, attendance, and 2-parent households) were not predictive. Further research should replicate this study (using HLM nesting analyses between and within Catholic schools) among students and adults in Catholic schools.

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“The biggest challenge for educators for the twenty-first century is going to be essentially the same as in the twentieth century, except [that in] the twenty-first century there is going to be no chance for anyone to get anywhere in life without an education. This started in the twentieth century, probably about 20 years ago; that accounts for the increasing crime rate and unrest, because so many people haven’t got an education and haven’t got anywhere to go with it except, literally, into some sort of self-destructive or destructive pursuit, like crime. In the twenty-first century that must be our focus: getting people educated. This requires a lot of changes in a lot of things that we are doing, especially in focusing on relationships, which our present schools don’t focus on nearly enough. When any group gets together to do anything, the success of the endeavor is directly proportional to how well the people in the endeavor are getting along together. So school is perhaps the most “people endeavor” that we have. And if both the student and the teachers and the parents don’t all get along well together, there is little chance for a successful school, and without a successful school there is no education. And so, relationships—really focusing on them and not pretending to focus on them—will be key to [education in] the twenty-first century.”

-William Glasser (audio transcription, 1997b, n.p.)

## CHAPTER I

### RESEARCH PROBLEM

#### *Introduction*

The vast majority of educational research has found an educational “achievement gap” between ethnoracial groups in American schools, even when compared within students of similar socioeconomic backgrounds (e.g., Coleman et al, 1966; College Board, 1999; Ferguson, 2000; Glazer, 1994; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Noguera, 2003, 2008; Noguera & Wing, 2006; Ogbu, 2003; Sacks, 2007; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997, 2003). In fact, the January 8, 2002<sup>3</sup> federal *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) has much of its origin in this gap. Its overall goal is to increase student achievement and thereby to close the achievement gap. The act’s purpose states:

... [T]his title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and State

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<sup>3</sup> The 2001 Act actually reiterates the concern for achievement gap from the 1965 Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.). It appears that little progress has been made in closing the gap since the onset of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s.

academic assessments. This purpose can be accomplished by ... closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers (U.S. Congress, 2001, Sec. 1001).

This national impetus seeks to combat historical and continued evidence of disparities in academic achievement between the races and ethnic groups as demonstrated in test scores, grades, drop-out rates, and almost every relevant indicator of academic performance. Swanson (2004) reports alarming statistics that approximately one-third of American public high school students do not graduate. Her statistics worsen when she reports that 50% of Black and Hispanic students in public schools do not graduate. Standardized test scores are no better. Generally the “gap” is usually measured at four academic years—that is, White graduating middle-class seniors score at the twelve-grade academic level while their classmates of color usually score at the eighth-grade level (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). Despite major national and local initiatives to rectify this disparity, things have not consistently changed. The 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data report that African American, Hispanic, and American Indian children were scoring 21 to 27 points below White children in general academic achievement (Walker & Darling, 2009). Concerning college-bound students, ACT scores reveal no better results (Mason, 2009). This past academic year, 2008-2009, marked the highest number of minority students ever taking

the ACT: 40%. African American and Hispanic students, however, scored 230 and 145 points below the national average, respectively.

In 2006, statistics from the U.S. Census Department report that non-Hispanic White adults have the highest proportion of high school or higher education (91%), followed by Asians (87%), African Americans (81%) and Hispanics (59%). Moreover, the Census Department reports yearly estimated earnings based on education to be \$29,448 for those with a high school diploma and \$19,915 or less for those without a high school diploma. Thus, this seemingly race- or ethnic-based educational difference will have far reaching effects on the students' futures and lives. Spring (2002) estimates that the 2050 United States' census will consist of 50% minority individuals. The gap, if it goes unchecked, has the possibility of being the catalyst of a social, cultural, and economic national catastrophe. NCLB has the target of eliminating the racial and socioeconomic achievement gap by 2014. At present, meeting this goal seems unlikely.

The reason for this gap is unclear. Researchers (e.g., Bardon, 2004; Conchas, 2006; Lee, 2002; Sinham, 2005) summarize the possible correlates into two groups: those that are "in school" and those that are "before and beyond school" (Bardon, 2004, p. 10). Other "in-school" or school-related variables include: prejudice *embedded* in the school's system of practices and policies. The following is a broad litany of "in-school" issues that might result in this gap: low expectations of teachers; practices of discrimination and segregation; limited funds and institutional resources; poor academics and course offerings; poor academic culture and dropout rates; negative school environment of crime and violence; implicit negative hidden curriculum; poor curriculum rigor; limited

teacher experience and attendance; poor teacher preparation; large class sizes; and limited technology and technology-assisted instruction.

Outside-school factors are those factors attributed to external physical environment or the *cultural ecology* of the group itself. This broad litany includes: birth weight, lead poisoning, hunger and nutrition, being read to, television watching, parent availability, student mobility, and limited parent participation in the educational process. Cultural issues include: the students' family culture and educational background, socioeconomic measurements of family, youth culture and poor student behavior, culturally and socially limited capital due to financial income, class resistance, oppositional cultures, limited acculturation or assimilation, English language ability, and class reproduction. The causes and possible explanations for the American ethnoracial achievement gap are, however, more comprehensive and far-reaching to be subsumed in any simple dichotomy.

Of particular interest are the possible differences in cultural and social capitals held by the minority and majority students in this achievement gap. These capitals represent "funds of knowledge" (see González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). These funds or cultures are historically accumulated and developed knowledge and skills essential for households, groups, or societies to function and maintain its well-being. America is fraught with diverse societies, classes, and cultures; likewise, the educational system has a variety represented—that is, schools, and the people therein, may have their own culture that might be different from their students. Grant (1988), however, makes an interesting observation about how possible dynamics of in-school and out-of-school

limitations might be met within a parent-private school covenant. He states that schools,

... collect families with certain dispositions—or lack of them. Active choice of a public or private school is meaningful: thus it is important for schools to know what common bonds and orientations currently attract parents or must be created. Where there is active consent, some element of choice and positive identification with the school exists; parents<sup>4</sup> are actively cooperating with the aims of the school. Ideally, the school represents a covenant between the teachers and parents on behalf of ideals to which all subscribe and by which all are bound. (p. 132).

For the purpose of this study, I will target the symptoms of the achievement gap phenomenon and academic achievement differences, while exploring ecological and non-ecological variable differences to see if they have correlative and predictive power. Accordingly, I will look at both the students' demographic background and their unique nature and components of the school's culture and climate. Too often, research has ignored not only the attitudes and values but also the internal life of the schools (Jencks, 1972; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Ouston, & Smith, 1979). It is my contention that the Catholic school, based on its theological and philosophical *raison d'être*, is more free from possible embedded detriments to achievement than other schools and that these Catholic schools might mitigate some issues of so-called cultural ecology (culture of

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<sup>4</sup> Parent-school interaction and parental choice are often significant factors in their children's educational capital, if not their educational success.



poverty,<sup>5</sup> limited educational background of parents, etc.) by forming a new academic culture for the students.

Catholic schools have played a significant role in the educational, political, and cultural life of the United States since the arrival of the Spanish in Florida, Puerto Rico, and the Southwest, the French in New Orleans, and the English and Irish in the Colonies (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Walch, 2003). Parochial and religious schools have a long history of serving low-income and ethnic minority children, especially in the urban areas of the United States. Originally established to sustain Catholic religious values and the cultural and ethnic traditions of recently arrived immigrants from Europe, parochial schools have served an important civic function of promoting the peaceful integration of generations of Catholic newcomers into American life (Buetow, 1988; Convey, 1992; Greeley, 1977, 2002; Hennesey, 1981; Tyack, 1974, 2003; Walch, 2003). Since the 1960s, however, a growing number of non-Catholic minority<sup>6</sup> parents, especially in urban neighborhoods, have enrolled their children in Catholic parochial schools (Buetow, 1988; Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Convey, 1992; McDonald, 2003). Enrollment information for the 2006-2007 school year reported by the National Catholic Education Association (McDonald, 2006) indicates that Catholic schools serve minority students and newly-arrived immigrants, as well as non-immigrant, White, Catholic, and non-Catholic students. That year, Catholic schools enrolled over 2.3 million students, approximately

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<sup>5</sup> I believe that social mitigation of the nonacademic or nondominant culture is additive and not subtractive, for anything otherwise would be insidiously hegemonic and a violation of individual human rights. This is what some have called “Whiteness.”

<sup>6</sup> The term “minority” usually refers to non-Catholic African Americans. To a lesser degree, it includes Hispanics who, while being predominately Catholic, have had less historical participation in the Catholic system of schools than other Catholic groups.

5% of the U.S. school population. Minorities comprised 25.7% of this number while non-Catholic students comprised 13.8%. Despite the shift of the Catholic population to the suburbs and economic constraints on education, Catholic educational institutions are still 31.8% urban with 11.8% of the total number being found in America's inner cities (McDonald, 2006).

Despite Catholic education's long history, few investigations focusing on the effectiveness of Catholic education were conducted prior to the 1980s. Proponents of Catholic schools contend that Catholic schools, especially in the inner city and urban areas, resemble the *common school* ideal of the nineteenth-century public school because, unlike the segregated public schools in the inner-city and the suburban areas of the country, Catholic school enrollment reflects the ethnic composition of the national population (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Cattaro, 2002). More importantly, Catholic schools continue to offer significant educational advantages to both mainstream and minority students in urban areas. Extensive research regarding student achievement in Catholic schools supports the finding that the academic benefits of Catholic schooling extend to all students, especially minority students (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982; Domanico, 2001; Greeley, 1982, 2002; Grogger & Neal, 2000; Hoffer, 1998; Hoffer, Greeley, & Coleman, 1985; Neal, 1998). In a study in New York City, Domanico (2001) found that not only did all Catholic school students have higher average test scores than public schools but Catholic schools with 95% non-White students also had higher academic achievement scores than integrated public schools. In addition, research has shown that Catholic schools were

more successful at keeping non-White students out of the lowest achievement levels and at offering minority students more college preparatory courses (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982; Grogger & Neal, 2000). Hale (1994) calls Catholic schools the “great equalizer,” where “[a]ll children should be taught ... so that their fortunes are not totally determined by the skills of their parents” (p. 87).

Greene (2005), whose writings figured significantly in John Stossel’s educational exposés in his television program *20/20* (Sloan, 2006a, 2006b), offers a series of educational myths that appear commonplace in American society. A subset of those myths is related directly to misconceptions or mistakes about Catholic education:

1. The myth of inconclusive research: The evidence on effectiveness of vouchers and the merit of nonpublic schools is mixed and inconclusive.
2. The students with disabilities need-not-apply myth: All private and Catholic schools do not serve students with disabilities.
3. The segregation myth: All private and Catholic schools are more racially segregated than public schools.
4. The Exeter myth: All private and Catholic schools have higher test scores because the students have more money and privileged backgrounds and because the schools recruit only high-performing students while expelling the low-performing students (see Green, 2005, pp. 157-165).

For this research, each of these myths is false for this Cleveland urban Catholic High School. In the next section, I will attempt to show that the research is not nullified by these selection bias issues—that is, that this Catholic high school does not select

disproportionately different students in terms of behavior, academics, wealth, or race. Knowing well that there are always empirical limitations, I realize that definitive answers are an epistemological impossibility, as statistics and science are ultimately measures of probability. Despite the controversy of selection bias, the whole of this area of research, discussion, and educational experience allows me to assert—to use the analogy of the hunter for dogged research persistence from Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991)—that, “there is something out there moving in the bushes” (p. 92).

### *The Three Pervasive Myths About*

#### *Catholic School Selection Bias in Educational Research*

What are the reasons for the effect difference between Catholic and non-Catholic, or public, schools? Is it a difference of the school (and system) or of the student? Although some of the early Catholic effect studies were challenged on methodological grounds (e.g., Alexander & Pallas, 1983), most other critiques attribute all (e.g., Brown, 2008; McAdoo, 2006; Phillips, 1991) or part (e.g., Bell, 2005; Gill, 2001; Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003; Lubienski & Lubienski, 2005, 2006; Murnane, Newstead, & Olsen, 1985) of these studies’ weaknesses to *selection bias*. Duncan and Sandy (2007) argue that the Catholic school effect has little to do with the Catholic school. Rather, the Catholic school effect is “driven largely by differences in the quality of the children in the two school systems” (Duncan & Sandy, 2007, p. 178). Coons (1997), for example, argues that the minority students in some of these effect studies, who do better in Catholic schools

than those in public schools, have greater wealth<sup>7</sup> than their public school counterparts. These critiques are the basis of what Dreeben calls the “selectivity controversy” (2000, p. 126), where again the students do not represent the general population of students. Accordingly, the critique asserts that any positive effect of Catholic schools, as a monolithic whole, is attributed to the selection of a privileged population from the outset. This population is obtained by some sort of cherry picking, or skimming, the cream of the academic population. Moreover, it would seem that this selective process is monitored by cleansing the system of students who do not measure up. In summary, the bias argument asserts that Catholic schools attain their difference because they are advantaged schools selecting advantaged students to give them advantaged results. Accordingly, there are two basic questions that can be asked: Who is selecting (parents and schools)? And who is being selected (schools and students)? Ultimately, these questions have only one investigatory dimension of the academic investigation: the students. How does one minimize an argument of over generalities and abstraction? The answer is, at least in part, with specificity. In this case that specificity of a Catholic school population will come from the particulars of the school and the student body in this study. Accordingly, I will treat the specific issues of academic and behavior selectivity (cherry picking the wealthy, the brightest, the most studious, and the best behaved), the easy expulsion of students who do not fit the model (purging the rotten

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<sup>7</sup> This point seems to be only common sense for a “tuition-based” over a publicly-funded system, if one imagines that all Catholic school students are paying full tuition out of their family’s disposable income. This is not always the case, and it is not the case at Cleveland Central Catholic High School, as I will later show. Accordingly, this critique may hold sway as a limitation for some of the previous research, but is far less weighty for the study at hand.

apples), and the weakness of a Catholic educational monolith concept as related to my study and my particular student sampling.

Issues of selectivity and selection bias are always at issue when anything except the entire population is studied. Unfortunately, one must always delimit any study when using a sample. Idealistically, a random assignment of that sample is desirable. Random assignment “solves the problem of selection bias by ensuring that treatment and control groups have similar characteristics” (Gill, Timpane, Ross, & Brewer, 2001, p. 73).<sup>8</sup> By its nature, Catholic educational research, however, is a sampling of a sample—that is, it studies a subset of the Catholic educational population that is a subset of national educational population. The question is whether that innate sampling of a sample is such that it would render the research null and void. At its extreme, arguments of selection can render all empirical research moot. To use another example, how can a study undertaken with participants in Alaska ever be generalizable to the rest of the country or the world? Would the variables that caused someone to live in Alaska preclude comparisons with anyone else? Even attempts at randomization would still have geographic limitations—that is, all randomly assigned individuals would still reside in Alaska. Would such a randomly-assigned participant pool have anything to speak to the experience of residents of Florida or Ohio? To continue this example, however, a study may be more informative if the research is seeking to learn about the

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<sup>8</sup> Even the voucher system’s lottery process, which is the basis of the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program (CSTP), cannot be argued to be truly random, as not all eligible students of Cleveland are members of the possible lottery pool. Special application for the lottery must be made, which might favor those with more informational capital. Additionally, only those who received a voucher during elementary school may receive a voucher as they matriculate at the beginning of high school. Newcomers to the voucher program are not allowed at the high school level.

difference of living in Alaska by comparing the amount of time individuals have lived there (e.g., one year, five years, twelve years, or all one's life). This is the added unique characteristic that I am using in this present research: to compare within-school differences within the Catholic school itself. Accordingly, a specific school setting can become more of a constant and the educational process itself may become more readily isolated and accessible. While the selection bias question can never fully be satisfied, these measures of within-Catholic-School differences must, at least, add some insight. This value-added approach to viewing the increasing levels of performance is a unique improvement over prior research. It is important to note that Sander (2001) asserts that a value-added model of research can "reduce bias" (p. 56). This is a unique addition to my present research—that is, targeting a within-school experience differential.

### *The Myth of Cherry Picking*

Alexander and Pallas (1983) assert that Catholic school differences are due to the "fact" that Catholic schools screen applicants and enroll highly motivated students. Put differently, the Catholic school performance effect is due to selection accusations in the three following areas: Catholic schools cherry pick the most academic, the best-behaved, and the most able (nondis/abled) students (Brown, 2008). Guerra (1988) states:

There is one persistent stereotype that rears its ugly head in debates about the apparent effectiveness of Catholic schools . . . How selective are Catholic schools? Do they choose only the docile, the affluent, or only those from strongly committed families? In fact, most Catholic schools accept all applicants. About

one-third of our Catholic high school are somewhat selective, and report rigorous academic criteria for admissions, but on average Catholic high schools accept 90% of all applicants, and about one-third report a fully open admissions policy, accepting all applicants. Nor is there a kind of reverse selectivity at work. The retention rates are extremely high for all students, including minority and low-income students, whose dropout rates are one-fourth of what they are in public schools (p. 6).

Cherry picking might be accurate in very large and competitive college preparatory Catholic high schools where charges of elitism might also be founded. Most Catholic schools in the inner city, however, accept a myriad of academic and motivational levels, which are in keeping with the institution's mission and survival.

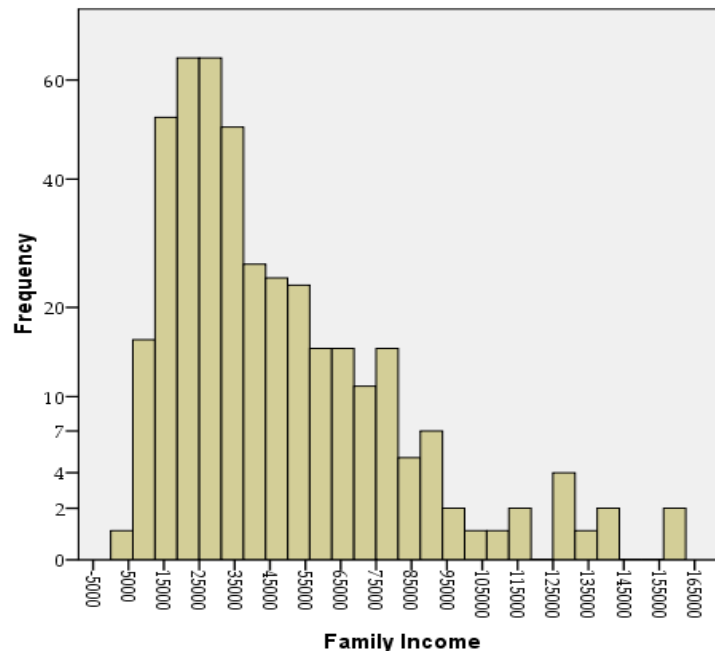
The two factors of admission policies and tuition requirements create the general perception that Catholic students are not representative of a typical population, which is presumed to be found in the local public schools. While there is, without question, some differentiation between families who select what is, in part, a fee-based tuition educational experience, there exists in Catholic education a myriad of financial assistance plans that make a private, Catholic education not merely the domain of the wealthy (e.g., government vouchers, work-programs, gifts in aid, fund-raising). This is the case for Cleveland Central Catholic. Figure 1 provides an overview of the Internal Revenue Service's 1040 data for the 2006 tax year for the parents of Cleveland Central Catholic's student body. The overall income ( $N = 405$ ) has a range between \$5,855 and



\$160,670, with a mean of \$39,688, median of \$32,171, and mode of \$36,154.<sup>9</sup>

Accordingly, about one-half of the students participating in this study incur a tuition cost of \$5,800 from a total annual family income of approximately \$32,000.

**Figure 1. Family Income Breakdown of Cleveland Central Catholic High School Students.**



Speaking as a former Admissions Director in this school, I would agree with Guerra.

While acknowledging the diversity of Catholic schools, there can be no assumption that the vast majority of Catholic inner-city high schools, who serve the students of the inner-city, have an elitist screening process. There are usually at least three institutional values that must come first: the mission to offer quality education, the philosophy of a preferential option for the poor, and the financial requirements to have enough students

<sup>9</sup> It should be pointed out, again, that these financial figures represent gross income. The school's financial assistance program is, however, based on an adjustment of this figure, taking into account family size, debt, handicapped, etc. Accordingly, the school uses an adjusted ability-to-pay figure in offering financial assistance in the form of grants and work-study. For this table, however, I used the gross figure so as to make an across-the-board comparison.

to meet budget. The hierarchy of these three variables is fluid, but I have never known elitism to ever come to the forefront.

By way of further demonstrating the student body's general ability makeup, I constructed Table 1. It records the average ninth-grade placement test scores for the students who participated in this present study when they were in eighth grade (i.e., cohorts for the following graduation years: 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010). The test results come from the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills Survey Battery (ITBS), Form A, Levels 7-14. The tested academic skills of these students demonstrate the overall entry-level academic skills of Cleveland Central Catholic's incoming students. It is important to note that the upper perimeters of the 95% Confidence Interval reached above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile only once. Accordingly, the vast majority (95%) of the student accepted into this Catholic school fall between the first and the 50th percentiles. An ANOVA comparing the grouped academic skill indicators failed to reveal any significant difference between the graduation-year cohorts. These are the students who were accepted for the ninth-grade class, though many students apply late and do not have the opportunity to take this placement test. Cleveland Central Catholic's current Director of Admissions, Antoinette Lambert (personal communication, July 20, 2008), states that these late-comers to the admissions process—who usually enroll during the summer—generally have poorer academic scores than those who take the general placement tests in the fall of the year. Central Catholic's Associate Principal and Academic Dean, Sister Allison Marie Gusdanovic, SND (personal communication, July 23, 2008), summarizes the academic skills of the last two ninth grade classes as follows: 40% of the students have reading

Table 1

*ITBS Percentile Scores for Cohorts Accepted to Cleveland Central Catholic High School by*

*Graduation Year*

ITBS Subtest	High School Grad. Class	n	%tile Means	%tile Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Test %tile Means		Range of Student %tile Scores
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Reading	2007	107	41.59	22.98	2.22	37.18	45.99	3-90
	2008	101	38.11	23.76	2.36	33.42	42.80	1-94
	2009	130	43.26	23.60	2.07	39.17	47.36	2-99
	2010	97	45.22	23.58	2.39	40.46	49.97	2-99
	Total	435	42.09	23.54	1.13	39.87	44.31	1-99
Language	2007	107	41.01	24.14	2.33	36.38	45.64	3-91
	2008	101	39.90	21.07	2.10	35.74	44.06	3-92
	2009	130	40.52	22.21	1.95	36.67	44.38	4-99
	2010	97	41.95	23.09	2.34	37.29	46.60	3-99
	Total	435	40.82	22.58	1.08	38.69	42.94	3-99
Math	2007	107	41.53	22.49	2.17	37.22	45.84	1-89
	2008	101	41.01	23.62	2.35	36.35	45.67	1-90
	2009	130	38.75	20.15	1.77	35.26	42.25	2-88
	2010	97	45.03	25.47	2.59	39.90	50.16	2-96
	Total	435	41.36	22.83	1.10	39.21	43.51	1-96
Total Battery	2007	107	39.83	21.82	2.11	35.65	44.01	4-90
	2008	101	37.88	21.00	2.09	33.74	42.03	1-90
	2009	130	39.28	20.55	1.80	35.71	42.84	2-99
	2010	97	42.75	22.68	2.30	38.18	47.32	2-98
	Total	435	39.86	21.45	1.03	37.84	41.89	1-99

\*Percentile normalization is based on Hoover, et al., 2005.

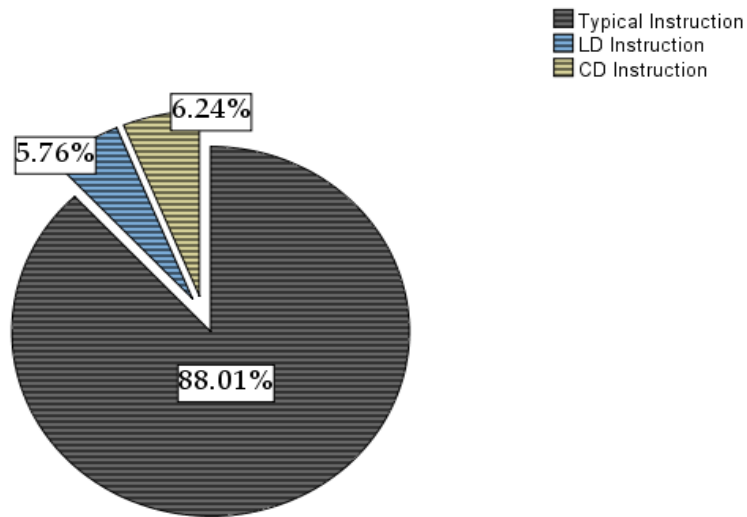
percentiles below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile and are enrolled in specialized reading coursework. Gusdanovic (personal communication, January 3, 2008) states that “[w]e do miracles with these kids considering what they come with and their skills” (n.p.). While the school has a special education curriculum, these students are not normally given the placement tests and are not included in these statistics.

This brings us to the corollary to the premise that Catholic schools cherry pick the best and the brightest: Catholic schools do not accept students with so-called “disabilities” (see Phillips, 1991). While many Catholic schools do not have specialized programs to deal with individuals with special needs, the assumption that Catholic schools do not accept individuals with disabilities is incorrect. Cleveland Central Catholic has two specialized programs for students with diagnosed Cognitive Disabilities and Specific Learning Disabilities (see Figure 2). Approximately 12% of the student population has a diagnosed learning difference. Those students who receive typical instruction compose 88% of the population, while 5.76% of the students receive some SLD-modified instruction and adaptation and 6.24% of the students receive instructional modification based on their diagnoses of cognitive delay. This 12% of the students is, however, merely those who are clinically diagnosed. Many students fail to reach the levels required for special governmental assistance due to the limitations of psychological testing and policy decisions of the Cleveland Municipal School District.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Being located within the City of Cleveland, the testing services, criteria, and policies are determined by the Cleveland Municipal School District and their employees.

Figure 2. Students by Academic Program.



### *The Myth of Rotten-Apple Purging*

Bean, Eichelberger, Morris, and Reed (2000) report that parents are attracted to Catholic education's commitment to high academic standards, personal attention to student needs, and greater discipline and security. The question, however, is posed: How are these traits obtained, especially the traditional character of Catholic school discipline? Are the students well behaved from the beginning of ninth grade? Do Catholic schools merely accept only the well-behaved students? Do the schools get rid of any students who misbehave? Are "rotten-apples" simply expelled? Concerning behavioral selectivity, discipline records might help to separate myth from reality, at least in this one school. My study accessed the discipline records of the 2007 student body. While the individual infractions (e.g., littering, vulgarity, fighting) are not available, each infraction had a coded numeric value. The year's summation of these

infraction numerical values will be used as a variable in this study. It is always important to note that general behavior may be less ideal than what documented infractions would indicate. Many teachers deal with smaller classroom infractions with simple correction and do not make formal administrative reports.

Table 2 offers a very simple summary of the total discipline points of the student body at approximately three weeks after the collection of the data for this study. The infraction points have range between zero and 49, with a mean of 7.92 and a median

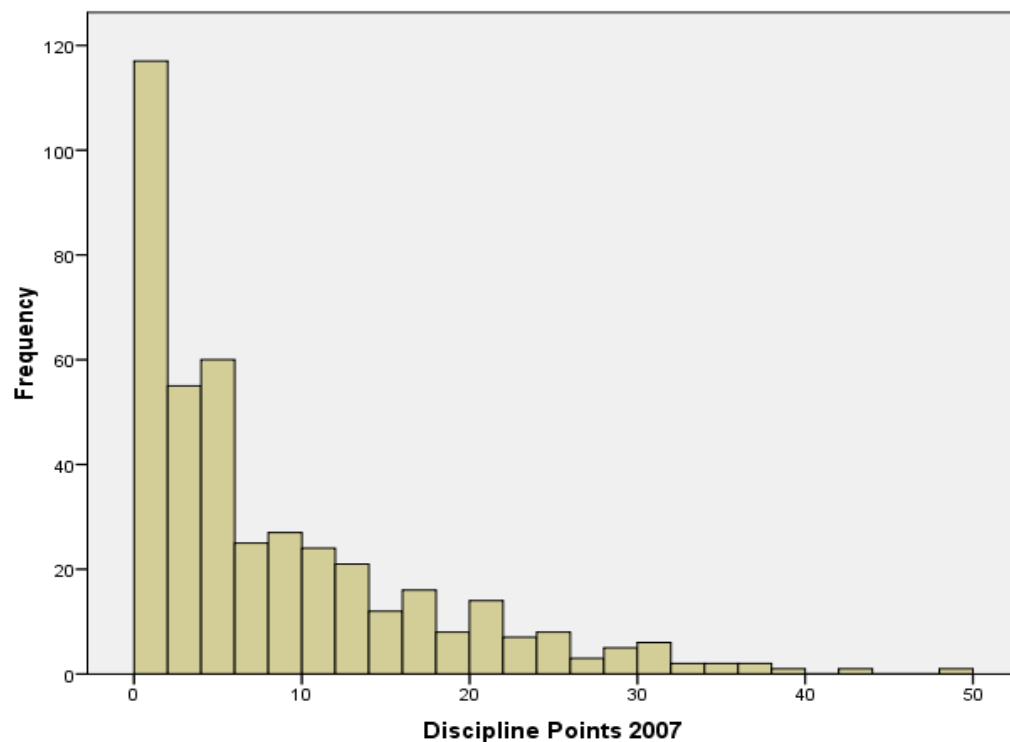
Table 2

*Discipline Points for the Academic Year 2006-2007*

<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mode</b>
417	0	49	7.92	8.85	5	0

of five. The most common score is zero with 20% of the total students. I assert, however, that due to informal correction by teachers who do not make formal infraction reports, it is naïve to think that students with no discipline points are perfectly behaved students. Figure 3 better demonstrates the discipline point frequency and distribution. Accordingly, it is easier to see the differences between the 20% of the student body with no infractions and the remaining 80%. A total of 62% of the students have discipline points at or below the mean, but 38% of the students have discipline points above the average. Eleven percent of the school had more than 20-discipline points. Moreover, 15 students had more than 30-discipline points, which included two students with 34

Figure 3. Frequency Distribution of Students' Total Discipline Points.



discipline points, two students with 37 points, and one student each with 39-, 43-, and 49-discipline points. If the myth is true, these students would have certainly been “tossed” for not meeting the mythologized perfect behavioral norm. They, however, were not.

While it would seem that most students are reasonably well behaved, receiving no-to-few infraction points, there are certainly students who have many indications of poor-to-very poor behavior. Thus, the idea that all Catholic schools—since Cleveland Central Catholic does not—take only well behaved students and that they summarily expel misbehaving students appears to be an overgeneralization, if not a myth. A leading Cleveland Catholic elementary principal, Lydia Harris, addressed this point of

the behavior selectivity myth accordingly: “There’s no cream in my crop until we put it there. It’s a myth that we take discipline problems and throw them out of the school. It’s the other way around. I get the kids the public schools can’t handle” (quoted in Shokraii, 1997, pp. 4-5). If she is correct, it appears that these students move to a school environment that is qualitatively different than what they had experienced previously. What then is that difference?

### *The Myth of a Catholic Educational Monolith: Unity and Diversity of the System of Catholic Schools*

The last factor in the overgeneralizations related to the selective bias issue of Catholic school research is a problem of definition. Often and especially when research is involved in the policy debates around school choice issues, terms are tossed about without clear differentiation (e.g., Catholic, religious, parochial, charter, private, elite, sectarian, etc.). There are three important distinctions as to the various types of schools:

1. Public Schools
2. Private Schools
3. Religious Schools

Schools offer a large variety within their ranks. Public schools encompass many local, national, and international levels, which include the local general education school, the special service educational subcontractor paid for with public funds, charter schools, magnet schools, Department of Defense schools, and international and other specialty schools (e.g., some special language schools, International Baccalaureate, Montessori).



Moreover, there exists in the international community religious public schools: Canada, Venezuela, and Greece, for example. Canadian “Catholic” (in terms of history, curriculum, charism, and governance) schools are completely funded by the government. Absent the American *establishment clause*, all schools that promote the national and public good are public schools. Additionally, there are those countries that have official religions. Greek and Venezuelan schools teach Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic doctrine, respectively, as part of their national curriculum. Thus, the notion of public school must be accompanied by greater specificity.

American educational institutions are unique due to America’s unique immigrant, sectarian, minority/majority history. The definitions are equally complex—that is, while public schools are somewhat uniform depending on the societal and economic electoral district make up, private schools vary substantially. This wide use of the term “private” school covers everything from Exeter to the local fundamentalist sectarian startups. Not all private schools are the same, especially if, by private, one means that they are not public.

Private schools can be divided by philosophies: religious, military, independent-prestige, and for-profit specialization and consignment schools (e.g., for special learning or behaviorally challenged students). While American religious schools vary from those that are Catholic, Baptist, Evangelical, Quaker, Episcopal, etc., to Jewish Hebrew schools and yeshivas and Islamic madrasas, Catholic religious schools represent the largest percentage of religious schools in the United States (Hunt, Joseph, & Nuzzi, 2001). Even if one examines only Catholic religious schools, however, they do not

represent a monolith. They vary widely based on their philosophy, mission, charism, governance, population served, and region. While the term *parochial school* is often interchangeable with *Catholic school*, parochial schools almost exclusively represent elementary schools and are shrinking in number due to school and parish closings and the development of regional Catholic educational consortia. When considering Catholic high schools, there is a multiplicity of embodiments (see Appendix B for a breakdown of the Catholic high schools in the metropolitan Cleveland, Ohio by type and orientation). This variety of Catholic schools is very representative of the national urban presence. While they are all Catholic schools, they vary widely. Rather than being a monolith, Catholic education is an aggregate that I have attempted to portray in Figure 4. This

Figure 4. Differences within Catholic Educational Institutions.

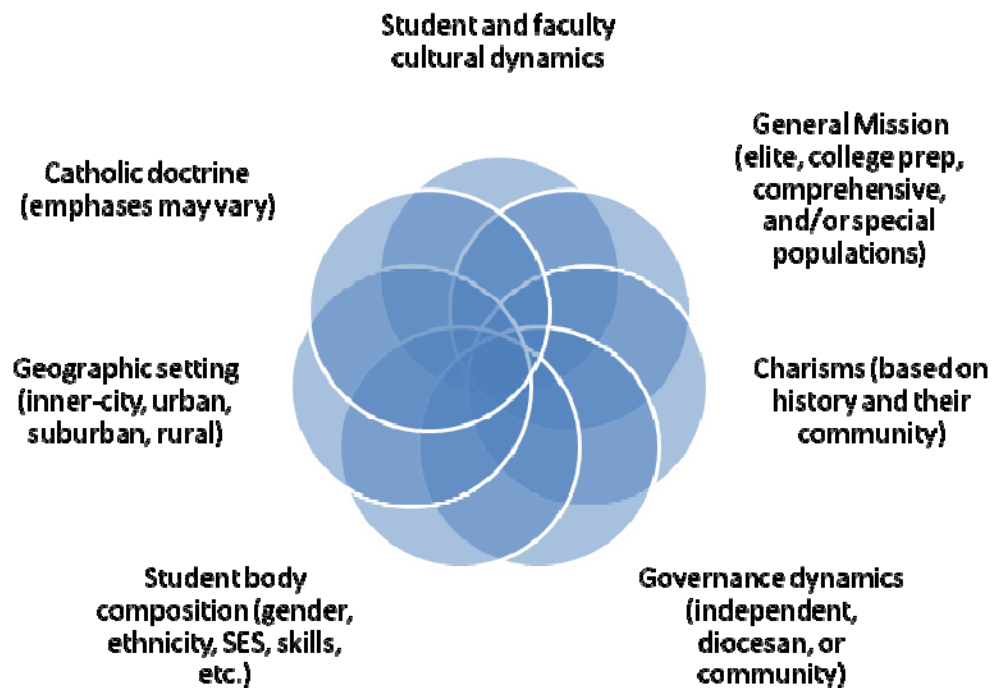


figure demonstrates how Catholic education represents a myriad of curricular emphases, student populations, regional backgrounds, leadership models, communal histories and charisms, and philosophical and theological orientations. Catholic education represents at once both diversity and unity, with more emphasis, however, on its diversity.

Accordingly, I believe that generalizing the Catholic-school effect can be problematic. Can all Catholic schools be lumped into one homogeneous population? No. Within the urban Catholic educational community, however, there is a type of common school phenomenon that works within the Catholic social justice doctrine where these schools deal with the poor, disenfranchised, and students at risk for limited educational success. These schools have more in common with each other than with the wider Catholic educational kaleidoscope by virtue of their student population and mission. I believe that this branch of Catholic education has the most importance for examining a true Catholic school effect that is more far reaching and instructive for the achievement gap. Where these Catholic schools minister among poor and largely minority populations, academic achievement has historically been limited by the generally negative predictors of class, race, and ethnic distinction (Coleman, et al., 1982; Dreeben, 2000,). Bryk (1988), however, asserts that these Catholic schools offer a “more equitable distribution of achievement” (p. 79) than do their public school counterparts. This is what the hunter has noticed “moving in the bushes” and what she needs to explore despite all the possible critics and critiques.

Selection bias exists when the variable under investigation within the sampling is confounded from the onset by the selection of the participants themselves. Again, this study hopes to make within-group comparisons within this urban Catholic high school, where the groups are similar with region/urban background, choice to attend Catholic school, and SES, leaving the only significant differences as their ethnoracial membership and other isolated demographics. If, as most research has found, there is an omnipresent difference between the academic achievement of minority/majority ethnoracial groups (e.g., a four-year testing difference), that difference should be found within this high school population also. If the academic difference is not found, either the racial achievement gap does not exist or there is something within the institution that mitigates the achievement gap.

What is it that makes a Catholic school different? It is not the crucifix on the wall that makes a Catholic school Catholic. Rather, it is the mission, philosophy, and theologically-based view of the human person and of the learner that carries with it a climate making ethos that brings most students much further than they could reach without such an atmosphere. It is an ingenious, if not insidious, straw man argument—that is, to over generalize all one sector of an aggregate branch of education as too selective, too different, or too good. What administrator would publicly argue against those points? Despite an isolated quip in the faculty room or in the administrative hallway, no one would argue that our students are not bright, are not good, or not better than others. This becomes even a rarer occasion when that class of school is ruled by Adam Smith's "invisible hand" of market forces and tuition dollars.

The decontextualization of reality so as to be studied (see Greeben, 2000) is similar to what Chesterton described as the limitation of art. He stated that “[a]rt is limitation; the essence of every picture is the frame” (quoted in Gould, 1996, p. 20). Likewise the limitation of every bit of empirical knowledge is the limitation of its empirical snapshot in space and time—that is, the metareality of empirical study is a type of reification, or manipulation, of reality so that we may, however imperfectly, know more about what we perceive to be in the distance. We do not, however, cease to look at bits of reality because it is framed by our epistemological inability to grasp the whole. Rather, we examine the part so as to attempt to know and to generalize to the whole (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12).

On a more practical level, I have attempted to address the issues of selection bias within my methodology in three ways:

1. I have sought to establish clear baselines for the student participants—that is that their academic and behavior backgrounds are not either significantly different or significantly higher than national percentiles (see Tables 1, 2, 3, & 4; and Figures 1, 2, & 3). Additionally, I attempted to demonstrate that these groups were not significantly different from one another on most important variables (e.g., wealth, academic indicators).
2. When examining academic achievement measurements, I will use and only speak of within-school measurements. I seek only to study the elements of a national phenomenon of ethnoracial difference within this school. I will not

make broad sweeping assertions as to the public sphere. Those conclusions are for the reader.

3. I will use a variable of percent of Catholic education for each student.

Therefore, differences of Catholic education might be able to be examined within the population of this Catholic school itself. Accordingly, some of the limitations of comparisons between different school systems might be minimized, since all students are presently within the same Catholic school experience in this moment in time. I find this variable to be innovated within the corpus of Catholic school research.

In summary, recent studies continue to support the educational benefits of Catholic schooling, especially for children living in urban areas<sup>11</sup> of the country (Grogger & Neal, 2000). Greene (2005) is correct: Catholic school effect research results are imperfect but they are certainly not “inconclusive” (p. 147). In contrast to the selection-based explanation, other theories predict greater effectiveness for Catholic schools. In the next section, I identify four distinct hypotheses, or models, that have been articulated by different researchers over the past decade or so. It is not so much the quality of the student, or her collective ethnography or socioeconomic habitus, who walks through the

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<sup>11</sup> The current political debate regarding tax support of parochial schools continues to revolve around the issue of the place of religion in the schools. Do parents have the right to use tax funds to send their children to schools that promote distinct religious values, or should tax funds be restricted to government sponsored schools that are ostensibly “value neutral” on the question of religion? The 2002 Supreme Court decision, *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, which upheld the voucher system in Cleveland, seems to support the notion of parental choice for religious schools, at least for children in urban areas.

door at the beginning of the year. It is, rather, the child who becomes the student formed in a social context of a Catholic school climate and culture that creates the effect. Again, this study will apply a rarely used within-Catholic-school model, which is basically a value-added model, which Hanushek and Taylor (1990) and Sander (2001) believe has the ability to minimize selection bias. The present study's employment of within-school Catholic experience offers possibly unique insights to differences between Catholic and non-Catholic schools without the extraneous impact of parent and student selectivity questions. To my knowledge, this within-school experience variable has not been used within the Catholic school research corpus, but it promises a unique contribution.

### *The Issue at Hand: A Catholic School Effect*

There seems to be something in Catholic education that increases achievement among inner-city, minority, and poor students. This is worth investigating. For this present study, the achievement differences between Catholic and public institutions are taken for granted, but as I hope to minimize some of the methodological critiques, I will study a rather homogeneous student body. A relatively homogeneous student body is apt to be a better source of information than that used in research conducted on low-income Catholic students by Benson, Yeager, Wood, Guerra, and Manno (1986). Benson et al. used an atypical student population. The segment of African Americans they surveyed were medium-to-high wealth Catholics who were attending a college preparatory high school. Additionally, they reported negative perceptions of their Catholic school climate, which is contrary to my findings (Hollis, 2006) that I

will discuss later. The fact that they surveyed predominately college preparatory schools with the accompanying admissions requirements is apt to make their results vulnerable to accusations of selection bias or a *cohort effect* when compared with comprehensive public schools. Comprehensibility of curriculum would seem to be a required constant in Catholic-public comparisons.

The ongoing deliberation about the effectiveness of Catholic schools over the public sphere will continue to be one of the perennial issues of educational debate. I am, however, interested in *within-school* measurements to gain insights into possible differences between races and ethnic groups within the Catholic school itself. While minorities in Catholic schools fare better than their counterparts in public schools, they still do not fare equally well to their nonminority classmates (Convey, 1992; Hunt, et al, 2004). The achievement gap between minorities and non-minorities appears to be alive and well in the Catholic system of schools, albeit less pronounced than the public system. Within the research, there seems to be little exploration of this fact. Too often, there seems to be a mere relief that it is significantly less than the public sphere. Research is silent as to the nature and reasons for the continued, albeit minimized, achievement gap within Catholic schools. There seems to be an implicit acceptance of the inevitability of a gap. I believe, however, that if the gap can be minimized,<sup>12</sup> then it may be possible to gain insights into the means of eliminating the gap altogether. I propose that significant difference in this achievement is a difference

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<sup>12</sup> Where the achievement gap is less or different should motivate a wealth of study (cf. Ogbu (2003). Consider Shaker Heights, Ohio. Why does such an apparently stellar school system in all aspects of the word still continue to produce minority students with an achievement gap?



in climate and culture between the schools.

### *School Climate*

The principal assumption of this study is that a school's culture gives rise to climate variables that influence student achievement, as well as teaching practices. School climate, however, does not have a unitary definition. The concept of school climate developed from a theoretical rather than an empirical base (Halpin & Croft, 1963; Tagiuri, 1968). Investigators of school climate typically define the concept through variables operationally on the basis of a particular model of educational leadership (Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland, 2002) or on the beliefs that a particular community holds about the nature of schooling. Demographic, social, and cultural factors that are peculiar to individual schools and districts are likely influences on climate variables. Thus, theory and ideology play important but sometimes unrecognized roles in studies of school climate. For this study, the affective and interpersonal roles of need fulfillment, of engagement, and motivation as viewed through Glasser's *choice theory* form the theoretical basis for research. This affective orientation of school climate will be based on a theoretical model of Catholic organizational climate.

Teacher interest in their students' social and emotional development, as well as their academic achievement, is a stated goal of Catholic education (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, 1998). This teacher and school focus on the development of the "whole person" within an

emphasis for a philosophical, religious, and existential community may create a positive school climate, promoting internal motivation that in turn encourages student achievement. Supportive relationships between and among administrators, teachers, and students are the hallmarks of a positive school climate. These relationships are the foundation of effective teaching, effortful student behavior, and academic achievement (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Coleman et al., 1966; Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland, 2002). Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) noted that teachers in Catholic schools seems to have stronger relationships with their students, and many teachers advised and coached numerous school activities that extended well beyond what is customary in most schools. The researchers concluded that the teachers' strong personal interest in the students was an important factor influencing the students' work ethic. This personal teacher-student relationship in the venue of academics can be conceived as *academic press*.

The link between aspects of school climate and academic achievement has been a focus of research in public schools for a number of years (e.g., Brookover et al., 1978; Bulach, Lunenburg, & McCallon, 1995; Haladyna & Thomas, 1979). Students' perceptions of climate are vital tools in understanding a school's culture and values, which promote or hinder educational achievement (Brookover, Schweitzer, Schneider, Beady, Flood, & Wisenbaker, 1978; Buckley, Storino, & Sebastiani, 2003; Esposito, 1999; Haladyna & Thomas, 1979; Hoy, Hannum, & Tschannen-Moran, 1998; Tagiuri, 1968). Each study focused on a different aspect of the construct. Moreover, most previous studies of climate and achievement focused on principals and administrative leaders geared for organizational change rather than student perceptions of climate per se.

However, few studies of this type have been undertaken with the nonpublic urban multicultural school population, especially with subsequent statistic analyses. The influence of school climate in Catholic schools may be different than the influence on public schools because of unique cultural, theological, philosophical, and historical issues. Although the topics of Catholic culture and climate are often points of discussion among Catholic school officials and religious educators, empirical correlational studies of Catholic school climate are rare.<sup>13</sup> This study will target the perception and self-reports from the students themselves.

Catholic schools may have a school climate that instills in students learning habits that contribute to higher academic achievement than if the same students attended public schools. If school climate is indeed a significant factor influencing the achievement of Catholic school students, an examination of school climate may benefit both Catholic and public educational institutions.

### *Background to this Study: The School*

This school had a most unique beginning and has been the source of considerable interest. Marking its fortieth anniversary this year, Cleveland Central Catholic High School began in 1968 when four parish high schools in the City of Cleveland—St. John Cantius in the Tremont Neighborhood, St. Michael’s in the Clark-West 25<sup>th</sup> Street Area, Our Lady of Lourdes in the Slavic Village/Broadway Area, and St. Stanislaus in the middle of Slavic Village—combined resources to create a new educational opportunity

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<sup>13</sup> Catholic schools chronically discuss the importance of school climate and attempt school satisfaction measurements. These findings, however, rarely undergo any formalized or serious statistical analysis other than mere tallying and averaging of Likert scores (Hollis, 2006).

for students in Cleveland. After a nine month period of intensive planning and extensive renovation, the school, with four campuses, opened its doors in September of 1969. The philosophy of education on which the school was established has been maintained throughout the school's history; namely, students of diverse backgrounds and abilities are educated in a Christian environment in an urban setting. The resulting school was one school with four campuses, where students, administrators, and faculty traveled between campuses to offer a vocational and college preparatory curriculum. The schedule was *module* and *block* prior to the terms and their practices becoming in vogue in the 1980s and 1990s, respectively. The four-campus system experiment allowed students to benefit from the personal atmosphere of a small school while the combined facilities provided the opportunities of a large school.

The succeeding years brought changes: the Broadway/Our Lady of Lourdes campus closed in 1976 and the Tremont/St. John Cantius campus closed in 1988. In 2003, the Forman/St. Stanislaus campus began renovations in anticipation of expansion of the campus in the Slavic Village area. At the end of that renovation process, the Scranton/St. Michael's campus was closed, leaving only one, Forman/St. Stanislaus, of the original four campuses. The original experiment of a four-campus school with a unified schedule and traveling students, faculty, and staff between the campuses had come to an end. The building and renovations, however, to that one site would continue. In December of 2006, an additional 25,000-square feet added more classrooms, a second gymnasium, administrative offices, and a chapel. This last Forman/St. Stanislaus campus in the Slavic Village Area of Cleveland's East Side is the site for the present

research.

Today, Cleveland Central Catholic High School offers a comprehensive curriculum, offering self-contained and inclusionary classes for students with cognitive disabilities and learning disabilities, business orientated vocational training, general coursework, and college preparatory and honors classes. Qualified students may also be enrolled in the Post Secondary Educational Option (PSEO), whereby they attend local universities for dual high school and college credit.

Due to Cleveland Central Catholic High School's historic uniqueness it has been the target of researchers, especially during the 1980s. It was one of the schools studied by researchers originally from Harvard University in the high school trilogy *Horace's Compromise* (Sizer, 1984, p. 7, 245), *The Shopping Mall High School* (Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985, p. 328), and *The Last Little Citadel* (Hampel, 1986, pp. 132-136). The school was also visited for the research appearing in *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (Bryk, Lee, and Holland, 1993, pp. 65-66, 100, 151-155, 331-332).

Sizer effectively anonymized any specific aspect of Cleveland Central Catholic into his broad generalizations about Catholic schools. Central Catholic was not readily identifiable. Nevertheless, the following components would appear possible factors for which Central might have contributed: the importance of decentralization of authority (pp. 205-206), the importance of positive and caring relationships and trust between teachers and students (p. 195), the importance of teaching as coaching (p. 192), the importance of a positive school climate (p. 127), and the role of teachers as a Christian vocation (p. 126-129). Powell, Farrar, and Cohen likewise mesh the identity of

Cleveland Central Catholic into a homogenized abstract blend of religious and secular private schools. Elements, however, such as the following may have data from Central: the importance of relationship in the education process (p. 86), the understanding of explicit and implicit “treaties” for behavior and learning between teachers and students (pp. 66-82), the dilemma of the “unspecial,” or average students in private education and its impact of “school reputations” (pp. 228-232), and the importance of a plethora of accommodations based on student uniqueness (pp. 1-15). Hampel (1986) explicitly chronicles the history and development of Cleveland Central Catholic from its four-source school, development of curricula, student services, racial and ethnic tensions in the neighborhood, and quotations from named and unnamed sources. One such instance is from a parent who stated: “They’ve (the staff) taken this fear out and replaced everything with love” (1986, p. 134). Hampel (1986) targets the racial and ethnic diversity of the school and the success in a turbulent area. Lastly, Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) describe Cleveland Central Catholic under the pseudonym of St. Cornelius (the rarely used first name of the priest-principal of that era), which was à propos as the explicit treatment of the school involved the day in the life of the principal, examining the decentralization of a unique multicampus school. Other elements discussed are the limited academic background of the students (p. 155), specialized program for poor readers (p. 110), the importance of personal relationships and community within the school (p. 155), and the spiritual dynamic of education (156). The book’s discussion of social capital and the bridge offered by Catholic education, especially for academic at-risk students, will be discussed below.

While the amount of research interest in Cleveland Central Catholic would appear considerable, it is quite dated. While Bryk, Lee, and Holland's book is the most recent work, published in 1993, the observations were performed in 1982 with a subsequent brief visitation circa 1991. My present research is some 25 years after the most recent study in this school. Moreover, these 25-plus years have made significant changes in the school. By way of comparison the following are changes between Bryk, Lee, and Holland's 1982 St. Cornelius and the Cleveland Central Catholic High School of 2007: the four regional campuses to one campus; 950 students to 485 students; 75% White student population to 25%; 19% African American student population to 59%; 6% Hispanic student population to 12%; \$1050 tuition cost to \$5,800; 18% religious faculty (sisters) to 3% religious faculty (2 sisters—one full time and one part-time); and priest principal to a married layman principal with six children.<sup>14</sup>

### *Background to this Study: The Research*

In 1996, I became vice principal of Cleveland Central Catholic High School with an emphasis on academics and accreditation. The North Central Accreditation Association and the Ohio Catholic School Accrediting Association accredit this comprehensive urban multiracial/multicultural high school. The primary component of

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<sup>14</sup> Overall demographics for the year of this study are as follows: Student racial/cultural statistical reports indicate that the student body consists of four students of American Indian background (<1%), three students of Asian background (<1%), 287 students of Black/African American background (59%), 58 students of Hispanic background (12%), 122 students of White background (25%), and 11 students of multiracial background (2%). Gender breakdowns consisted of 227 boys (47%) and 258 girls (53%). Religious affiliation consists of 226 and 259, self-reported Catholics (47%) and non-Catholics (53%), respectively. Socio-economic indicators reveal that 276 students qualify for federal government's free or reduced lunch program, thus indicating a school poverty rate of 57%. Additionally, over 63% of the student population participated in the State-sponsored voucher program.

these accreditation processes is the development of an ongoing school improvement plan, which requires a school to undertake a cyclical process of self-evaluation of its academic and school climate. During these assessments, I found many positive student responses to a variety of school climate factors.

In 2006, I presented my school climate findings at the Midwest Educational Research Association's annual conference (Hollis, 2006). My analysis<sup>15</sup> of demographic and school climate factors (see Appendix B) produced many significant correlations ( $p < .01$  and  $.001$ ). Most interesting were the students' feelings, disaggregated by race and ethnicity, of equal treatment (ecology) at school. Minority students perceived no difference in treatment at school, which seemed to be an infrequent occurrence (see Fryer & Levitt, 2004; Obgu 2003). Specifically, the most significant racial and ethnic equity findings were the following:

1. Increasing Grade Levels negatively correlated<sup>16</sup> with General Respect at School and Treatment Equity by Teachers and Staff ( $p < .001$ ).
2. Teacher (positive) Attributes positively correlated with Religious Components ( $r = .612, p = .001$ ), School Fondness ( $r = .507, p < .001$ ), and Treatment Equity ( $r = .467, p < .001$ ). Teacher attributes included student

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<sup>15</sup> In 2004, the climate instrument, accompanied by a wealth of demographic items (see Appendix A), was administered to 340 students, grades 9-12, in the school (89% of the total school population). This school primarily served students from low-to-moderate income families (72% of the student are eligible for the federal free or reduced lunch program). Additional only 51% reported being Catholic and 96% of the students came from the City of Cleveland, which was recently determined to have the highest poverty rate in the country with accompanying low municipal academic standards. The Reuters news organization reported in 2001 that "Cleveland's troubled school system is at the bottom of the barrel of U.S. public schools" (Reuters, 2001, n.p.).

<sup>16</sup> This is consistent with other studies that find that students view school a more negative experience as they age (e.g., Hoy & Hannum, 1997; Lempers & Clark-Lempers, 1992).



perceptions of teachers' caring for and liking of students. These findings support the importance of interpersonal relationships between instructors/staff and students in high schools, in general, and among urban populations, specifically.

3. Religious Components positively correlated with Treatment Equity ( $r = .532$ ,  $p < .001$ ), Quality of Program ( $r = .528$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and School Fondness ( $r = .515$ ,  $p < .001$ ).
4. In a post-hoc differentiation between racial and ethnic groups, students felt positively (equally) treated by the school's educational staff, with the slight exception of Hispanic students, who found faculty and staff interpersonal relations significantly more positive than did their White and Black classmates.<sup>17</sup> Hispanic students were the only group to significantly differ on the basis of their positive perceptions of Faculty Attributes. This finding should be investigated further and is especially important due to the absence of adequate research examining Hispanic students in the achievement gap.

This present study hopes to replicate the previous study and to provide further analysis of this school's equality treatment. Added to this study will be indications of academic achievement (e.g., GPA and standardized test scores) so as to explore students' climate and equity feelings as possible mitigation of the achievement gap.

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<sup>17</sup> This was again very interesting, as the perception of school climate would seem to be more negative among minorities, for example, the results of Benson et al. (1986) found negative climate responses of African Americans when compared to Whites and Hispanics.

### *Statement of the Problem*

Most research that addresses the achievement gap is in the public school sphere. When the private or Catholic school systems are introduced, it is usually merely to state that the gap is less significant than in the public arena (e.g., Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982; Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Covey, 1992; Greeley, 2002). To date, I have found no studies that adequately investigate the achievement gap of minority students within the Catholic school system other than to admit its existence. I have found none that investigate the specifics of within-school achievement and racial/ethnic differences, notwithstanding Benson, et al., (1986) with their limitations. If it is less than the gap found in the public school sphere, why? If it is, however, still present, then why? Are the factors which contribute to the achievement gap in the public sphere the same as those in the Catholic scholastic environment?

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to examine academic achievement disaggregated and correlated by demographics and components of student climate as an outgrowth of organizational Catholic culture. It seeks to replicate the findings of racial equity I found in previous research at the school (Hollis, 2006) with normalized academic measurements—that is, it will seek to move beyond student self-reports of fair academic treatment by the faculty and institution by adding standardized testing and grade measurements. It is my contention that Catholic school climate is founded on Catholic organizational culture that flows out of the intellectual and religious nature and mission

of its Catholicity. Hence the academic achievement of Catholic schools should reflect that nature and climate. It is that difference of culture that is the basis for the difference between Catholic and non-Catholic schools. If there is a difference in the ethnoracial academic achievement gap between Catholic and non-Catholic schools, then that difference is based on the experience of Catholic education (as controlled as much as possible for selection biases)—that is, the experience lived within a social environment based on Catholic ideology, nature, culture, and/or climate. This experience would, therefore, be the mitigating factor. Accordingly, within-school variables and within-school measurements within Catholic education—especially related to differences in percentage of Catholic education—should allow for possible mitigating factors of the achievement gap. Accordingly, within-Catholic School variables will be explored and may offer insights into the overall achievement gap.

This study will compare student perceptions of the school's climate to tangible measurements of academic achievement. In this study, choice theory will be the theoretical basis for understanding school climate, the independent variable. Specifically, school climate is the extent to which students perceive that their psychological needs of achievement and belonging are met and that they experience positive interpersonal and academic feelings from staff and teachers (see Glasser, 1988, 1992, 1993, 1997a, 1997b, 1998, 2000a; Goldstein, 1999; Malley et al., 2003; Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schaps, 1997; Wubbolding, 2000). Although the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education has enjoined Catholic educators to imbue their schools with a distinctive Catholic organizational climate that supports student

achievement as well as social, psychological, and religious development (*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, 1998), correlational studies of climate are rare. Based on the apparent lack of research in this area, the problem most pertinent to this study is whether or not a relationship exists between school climate and academic achievement in Catholic schools, especially in the face of my findings (Hollis, 2006) of perceptions of treatment equity within a multicultural and multiracial student population (cf. Ogbu, 2003 with his negative achievement findings despite the relative affluence of the minority population). Additionally, Catholic school studies, especially those emphasizing students from lower socioeconomic background, are usually performed by (etic) outsiders from the school. I, however, have 22-years of experience in inner-city Catholic High School education, with additional experience investigating issues related to school climate, achievement, and religious formation. Additionally, I have the experience of being a person with dis/ability who began his academic career in a Catholic school as a non-Catholic.

For the study at hand, the dependent or effect variable is academic achievement as measured by students' self-reported GPA, school-reported GPA, and student scores on standardized testing. Independent variables consist of demographic issues, background in Catholic education, and composites of school climate.

### *Research Questions*

Collected from this comprehensive curriculum, urban multiethnic and multiracial Catholic high school, the study will examine racial and ethnic academic achievement and climate perceptions within the student body. The following overarching research questions will guide the investigation:

1. What are the dimensions of school climate within this school?
2. What are the demographic and climate factors that correlate with school academic achievement?
3. Does the length of Catholic school experience, school climate measurements, race, wealth, or other demographics impact or predict academic achievement?
4. What input or insights do recent graduates from this school have about this research's data?

These four research questions are geared toward attempting to gain insights into the issues and identifying possible variables to decrease the achievement gap among racial and ethnic minorities. The real agenda underlying educational reform is to change a school's organizational culture and values, not to implement a single innovation (Fullan, 2001).

### *Delimitations*

Delimitations of this study are based on my decisions as to the research site, the use of group labels, the instrumentation, and the measurement of academic achievement. The study will only examine students from one urban Midwestern

Catholic high school. While the students come from only one school, this student body offers a degree of socioeconomic homogeneity and racial and ethnic diversity unparalleled in this Catholic school district, which is the fifth largest in the United States (McDonald, 2007). All grades (9-12) and ages (13-18) will be included. The student population may also exhibit greater academic variety than other Catholic schools in the district, owing to the large number of students who are funded by the State voucher program. Additionally, academic heterogeneity is intensified by the school's two special education programs for students with specific learning dis/abilities and for those with cognitive dis/abilities.

When discussing race or ethnicity, generalities are always made so the speaker can form a manageable general concept. Carpenter, Ramirez, and Severn (2008) are quite correct in their insights into the diversity among the racial and ethnic groups. For this study, I will use the general term Hispanic, knowing that my participants have different cultural and national backgrounds from Puerto Rico, Mexico, Cuba, Guatemala, El Salvador, Peru, Honduras, etc. A sacrifice of individual national and immigration history is required so as to speak of a group, even knowing that 82% of Hispanics in Cleveland have Puerto Rican roots (U.S. Census, 2000). Likewise, to speak of African Americans is to gloss over the individual whose histories are antebellum, Native American, Caribbean, Modern African, etc. The same is true for the designation of White students. Nevertheless, so as to operate theoretically, I will imperfectly treat these racial and ethnic groups as monoliths, knowing that these generalizations have limits and weaknesses.

The methodology's delimitation is due to the decision to measure the school climate by questionnaire. Accordingly, the explorations of deeper meaning and examining the students' voices will be limited. A questionnaire cannot probe deeply into a respondent's feelings or opinions, nor can items be clarified if respondents are uncertain of the meaning. In an effort to gain the most input from the students and insight into their experience, a questionnaire with tested positive past success with this specific population will be used (see Appendix B). Additionally, the entire student body will take part in the study, notwithstanding those absent on the day of the questionnaire's administration. In an effort to further gain student input, the confirmatory focus group will be employed. Accordingly, Vaughn, Shay, and Sinagub (1996) suggest that information gathered in focus groups can be used to "fine tune" the research findings. They believe that focus groups can be used in concert with quantitative methods as a way of verifying findings of survey research, to make research come alive, and to put a human face on numbers.

Achievement measurements must always be delimited. No measurement can summarize the entire academic ability or potential of a student. Academic measurements such as standardized tests and GPA are by nature merely a snapshot of that student's particular application and motivation, too often using limited modalities of past instruction and learning. All academic achievement research, however, suffers from the same epistemological issue. In this study, however, I will not only use the traditional measurement of cumulative GPA but also the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT), which is initially administered in the tenth grade. The OGT offers components of critical

and analytic thinking through extended-response compositions, which is superior to most standardized tests that are wholly multiple-choice questions. Additionally, the normalization of these OGTs, are based on the student population of the State of Ohio, who, while diverse, is less varied than those tests normalized on the whole of the U.S. student population.

### *Theoretical Foundation of the Study*

#### *Social Capital and Its Importance*

Social capital is a highly complex notion. Perhaps most simply put, the concept can be understood by the assertion that relationships count, and the degree to which they count is defined as social capital (Narayan & Pritchett, 2001, p. 280). Its understanding ranges from the beautiful simplicity that “social relationships count” to the more complete multifaceted network based on three tiered hierarchical aggregate (see Halpern, 2005). It is a type of symbolic capital that runs parallel and intersects with both cultural and human capital, which is distinguished from financial and physical. For the best understanding, I believe one must understand the basic concept of “capital,” which Lin simply defines as “investment of resources with expected returns in the marketplace” (2001, p. 3). Accordingly, financial is monetary investment, academic is related to knowledge, and human (also known as symbolic and personal) forms of capital, which generally are broken down into social, and cultural, are capital which are relational in community and related to group norms and behavior, respectively. It is a meeting of social network and financial/vocational movement. Coleman states that:



“Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some corporate [societal] factors within the structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible” (1988, p. 96; 1992, p. 302).

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 119) state that, “Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. Acknowledging that capital can take a variety of forms is indispensable to explain the structure and dynamics of differentiated societies.”

Field states that social capital's "central thesis can be summed up in two words: relationships matter" (Field, 2004, p. 1). Putnam (1995) states that “[f]eatures of social life—networks, norms, and trust—that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives ... Social capital, in short refers to social connections and the attendant norms and trust” (pp. 664-665). Key to this notion is that every social network, of which school is a significant social network, has a cluster of norms, values, and expectations which members share and sanctions are used to enforce adherence (Halpern, 2005). Again, Putnam states:

By making connections with one another, and keeping them going over time, people are able to work together to achieve things that they either could not achieve by themselves, or could only achieve with great difficulty. People connect through a series of networks and they tend to share common values with

other members of these networks; to the extent that these networks constitute a resource, they can be seen as forming a kind of capital. As well as being useful in its immediate context, this stock of capital can often be drawn on in other settings. In general, then, it follows that the more people you know, and the more you share a common outlook with them, the richer you are in social capital (1993, p. 169).

In summary, social capital is an essential feature of social organizations that includes trust, norms, and networks, which can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions. Bourdieu largely treated the idea of social capital as an "adjunct or even a dimension of cultural capital (Robbins 2000, p. 26; Field, 2004, p. 15).

These notions of cultural capital are important where students come from varied backgrounds. Bourdieu explained the notion of cultural capital in order to explain the unequal academic achievement of children from different social classes and from different groups within social classes. By pursuing appropriate "cultural investment strategies" within the family, some social groups were able to ensure that their children optimized the yield from education. The transmission of cultural capital represented the most effective form of hereditary transmission of capital, because it went largely unhidden and therefore was less readily subject to control, whereas the inheritance of economic wealth might be reined by taxation (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Coleman's interest in social capital emerged from attempts to explain relationships between social inequality and academic achievement in schools (Field, 2004, p. 22). These notions of

capital—to increasing levels of intimacy<sup>18</sup> from social and societal to communal—are present in the common bonds of good feelings, which many researchers call school climate.

### *The Concepts of School Climate and Culture*

Although the concept school climate has been studied extensively, there is a lack of agreement as to the definition of the construct. Definitions of school climate are many and varied. Terms<sup>19</sup> such as school "tone," "setting," "atmosphere," "feelings," "milieu," (Tagiuri, 1988), and "school ethos" (Rutter et al., 1979) have been used. Halpin and Croft (1963) use an analogy to describe climate: "Personality is to the individual as climate is to the organization" (p.1). Additionally, there are significant affective components. Howard, Howell, and Brainard (1987) state that,

A school's climate is its atmosphere for learning. It includes the feelings people have about the school and whether it is a place where learning can occur. A positive climate makes a school a place where both staff and students want to spend a substantial portion of their time; it is a good place to be (p. 5).

Haynes, Emmons, and Ben-Avie (1997) add that,

school climate refers to the quality and consistency of interpersonal

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<sup>18</sup> Tönnie's differentiation between purposive association (which he termed *Gemeinschaft*, or community) and the instrumental association (which he called *Gesellschaft*, or society) might be applied in this increasing level of intimacy (see Field, 2004, p. 5). Accordingly, the social realities and relationships based on some formal social contract or mutual support or defense relationship is substantially different than that based on a series of relationships based on caring and love.

<sup>19</sup> Some researchers have used the term "culture" to mean climate (e.g., Purkey and Smith, 1983; Deal, 1985). I, however, wish to make a theoretical and topological distinction between climate and culture, as I will argue that climate flows from organizational culture.

interactions within the school community that influence children's cognitive, social, and psychological development. These interpersonal interactions include those among staff persons, staff and students, among students, and between the home and school (p. 322).

### ***Relationship of Climate to Culture***

Hoy, Tarter, and Kottkamp (1991) state that “. . . definitions of climate and culture often are blurred. A useful distinction is that culture consists of the shared assumptions and ideologies, while climate is defined by shared perceptions of behavior” (p. 7). Owens (1987) states that "organizational climate is related to, and subsumed under, organizational culture inasmuch as the perceptions of individuals in the organization reflect the values and belief systems in the environment of the organization" (p. 169). Continuing, Owens argues that "the culture of an organization exerts powerful influence on the development of climate" (p. 170). To summarize the difference between climate and culture, one might say that culture deals with "how the work of the school gets done," whereas climate deals with the "feeling tone" of the school's internal environment.

A growing number of research studies are confirming what educators and parents have long known: how we feel about being in school shapes learning and development. Safe, caring, participatory and responsive school climates tend to foster great attachment to school as well as providing the optimal foundation for social, emotional and academic learning (Blum, et al., 2002; McNeely, et al., 2002; Osterman,

2000). Aronson (2004) states that “[h]uman intellectual performance is far more fragile than we customarily think; it can rise and fall depending on social context” (p. 16). Effective risk prevention and health promotion efforts are correlated with safe, caring, participatory and responsive school climate (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Catalano, et al., 2002; Cohen, 2001 & 2006; Greenberg, et al. 2003; Wang, et al., 1993). After reviewing the effectiveness literature, Mackenzie (1983) claims that "the overall climate and atmosphere of the school can be seen as a crucible for the personal efficacy of those who work there" (p. 10). In a similar review of the research, Purkey and Smith (1983) conclude that a student's chances for success in learning cognitive skills are heavily influenced by the climate of the school. In fact, they propose a theory of school effectiveness based on changing the culture of the school. They argued that "an academically effective school is distinguished by its culture: a structure, process and climate of values and norms that channel staff and students in the direction of successful teaching and learning" (p. 68).

### *A Conceptual Model*

In a seminal review of the theory of organizational climate, Anderson (1982) defines climate as the “total environmental quality” within an organization and offers a topical breakdown of climate components from previous literature:

1. Ecology variables: Physical/material variables in the school are external to participants, such as building characteristics (e.g., cleanliness, lighting).

2. Milieu variables: Variables that represent characteristics of individuals in the school, such as teacher characteristics (number of years teaching), satisfaction, teacher morale, student body characteristics (demographic information), and student morale.
3. Social system variables: Variables that concern patterns or rules (formal and informal) of operating and interacting in the school, such as administrative organization, instructional programming, ability grouping, administrator-teacher rapport, teacher shared decision making, communication, teacher-student relationships, student shared decision making, opportunity for student participation, teacher-teacher relationships, and community school relationships.
4. Culture variables: Variables that reflect norms, belief systems, and values of various groups within the school such as teacher commitment, peer norms, cooperative emphasis, expectations, degree of consistency, consensus, and clear goals.

It is this latter component of culture that I believe is instrumental to Catholic schools. I believe that the religious, philosophical, and historical dynamics of Catholicism represents a school's *organizational culture* in terms of modern organization theory. In Figures 5 and 6, I attempt to put forward theoretical models from which to base an overarching theoretical conception so as to see Catholic organizational culture at the center and core of the lived experience of a school and foundational to the climate of a Catholic school.

## *Organizational Culture*

The literature concerning organizational culture is likewise varied, though there is more agreement than that offered by climate. Schein (1985) defines this type of culture as "... the solution to external and internal problems that has worked consistently for a group and that is therefore taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think about, and feel in relation to these problems" (pp. 19-20). Deal and Kennedy (1982) define cultural organization as: "consist[ing] of patterns of thought, behavior, and artifacts that symbolize and give meaning to the workplace" (p.15). Similarly, Kilmann, Sexton, and Serpa (1985) define the phenomenon as "the shared philosophies, ideologies, values, assumptions, beliefs, expectations, attitudes and norms that knit a community together" (p.5). Schein (1992) contends that these "solutions eventually come to be assumptions about the nature of reality, time, truth, space, human nature, human activity, and human relationships . . ." (p.19). They eventually become taken for granted and drop out of awareness. Hence, the culture is known at both a surface and deep levels—that is, both thematic and prethematic. Because of the human need for consistency and order, the assumptions tend to form a pattern that is implicit, taken for granted, and unconscious. It is only through a process of inquiry that they are brought to the surface.

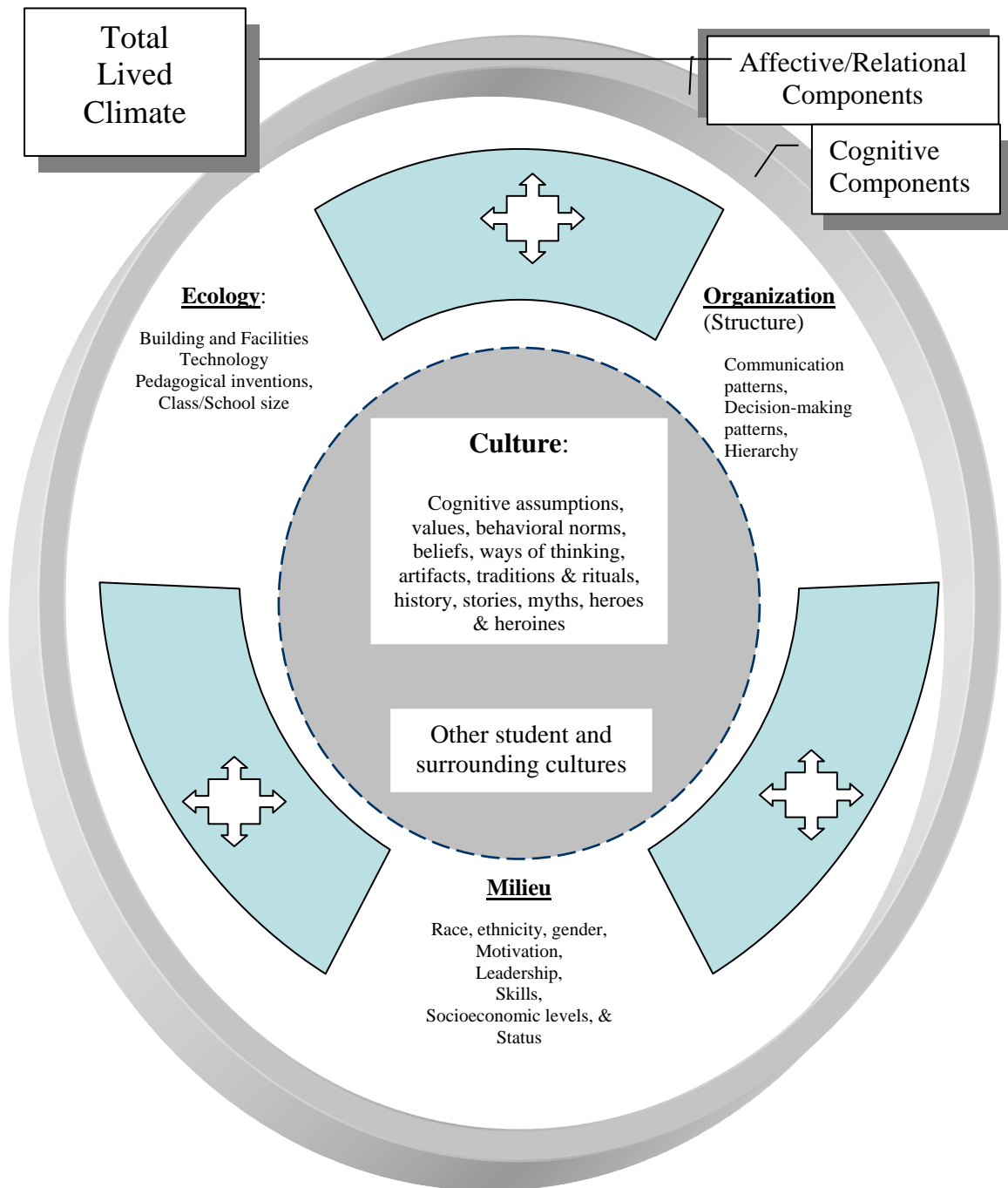
My model (see Figure 5) moves the organizational culture and its components from a quadrant to the center. This intellectual, philosophical, religious, historical, and symbolic superstructure grounds the whole of the organization. I will discuss the specifics of this Catholic superstructure in terms of doctrinal self-

understanding and philosophy of education later. If the school is, indeed, Catholic, it will have a religious/theological component that would be separate or distinct, if not foreign, from its secular public counterpart. Accordingly, the physical ecology, organizational structure, and the general and specific social milieu are, in turn, filtered, interpreted, and grounded by this center. This process forms the basic structure of relationships in the building that is the basis for the school's climate and is known affectively, both consciously and unconsciously.

Kilmann, Sexton, and Serpa (1985) and Schein (1985) contend that culture not only manifests itself in behavioral norms, hidden assumptions, and anthropology, but that these occur at different levels of depth. Norms are just below the surface of experience; they have an "ought to" quality to them (i.e., morality/ethic). As a rule they are transmitted from one person to another by stories, rites, rituals, and sanctions for violating norms. At the deepest level of culture, according to Schein (1985), is "the collective manifestation of human nature—the collection of human dynamics, wants, motives and desires that make a group of people unique" (p. 7). When referring to the community of Hamilton High, Grant (1988) echoes this notion of culture: "Good communities [and in turn schools] are characterized by ritual and celebrations that underscore communal values" (p. 108).



Figure 5. Model of Catholic School Organization.

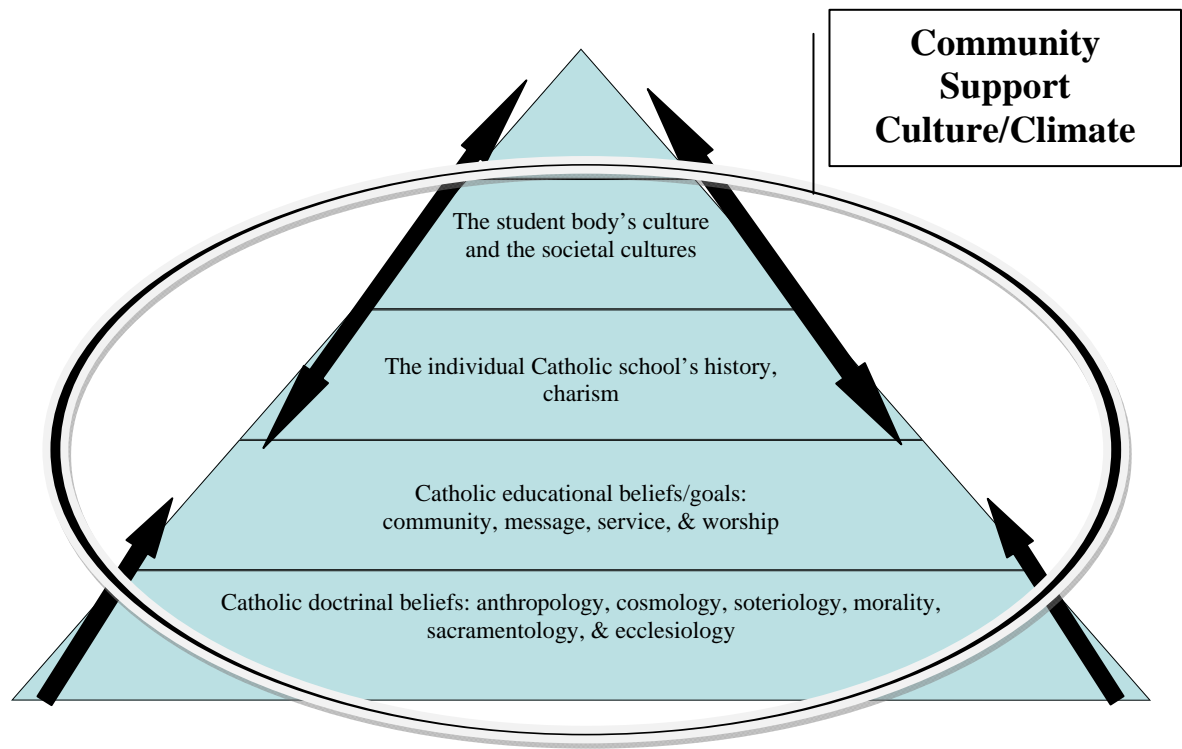


Sources: Adapted from Anderson, 1982; Kilmann, Saxton, & Serpa, 1985; Owen, 2001;

Tagiuri, 1968; Tagiuri & Litwins, 1968; Shani & Lau, 2005.

These elements of modern organizational theory might well be used to describe religion and religious organizations. Sociologically speaking, what is religion other than a group dynamic of similar beliefs? Religion establishes a sacred reality, a symbolic universe, which becomes the thematic and prethematic underpinnings for lived reality—that is, the reality is known at various levels of conscious and unconscious awareness (see Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Eliade, 1959). This symbolic world, which is affective and cognitive and narrative and symbolic, is deeper but akin to the construction and maintenance of social convention, ideology, philosophy, and mythology. It is the shared experience and understanding of that experience of a community. Within Catholic schools, the lived history, organizational structure, religious narrative and symbolism, philosophy, anthropology, soteriology, sacramentology, ecclesiology, and cosmology merge together to form the cultural basis for the schools community. As represented in Figure 6, I would argue that the Catholic narrative and discourse is the basis for the Catholic school's social institutions' organizational culture, though there are certainly multiple cultures available to any organization. Catholicism has strong elements of its own belief system, heroes and heroines, rites and rituals, myths, and organizational structure. It is able to form the basis of an organization's culture. Kilmann, Sexton, and Serpa (1985) echo this in their treatment of organizational culture. Culture includes a "credo" or a belief system (p. 22). Additionally, Coleman (1990) includes ideology, along with closure and stability, as consequences of social capital. He believes that social capital can be an outgrowth of religious ideology. He states that religious

Figure 6. Topology of Catholic Organizational School Culture.



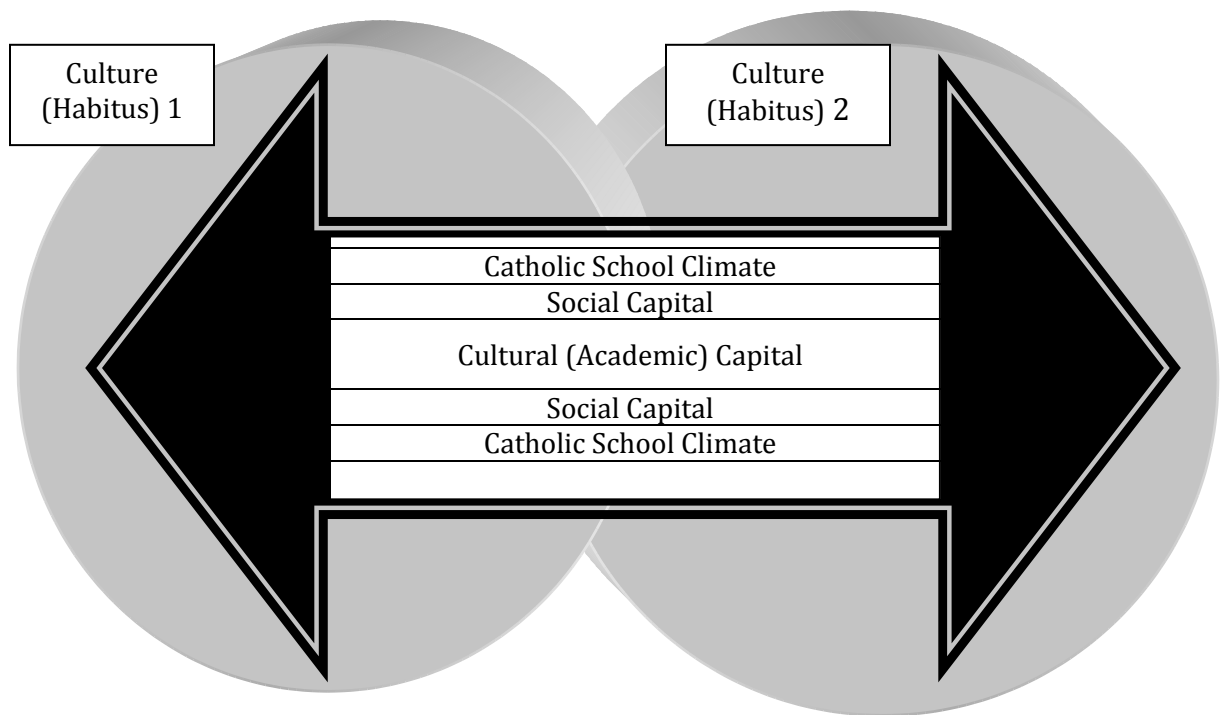
ideology has an effect of “leading a person to attend to the interest of others . . . [and] has been noted from comparisons of religious and secular schools” (p. 320). The Catholic school ideology—grounded in the four goals<sup>20</sup> of Catholic schools of community, word, service, and prayer—and the Catholic school lived and shared reality of a school affect the character and quality of the school, as well as the accomplishments of the students more than any other factor. This is also the understanding of a Catholic school as expressed in its mission statement and philosophy (cf. Cleveland Central Catholic Mission Statement in Appendix E). The last level contains unique socio-

<sup>20</sup> These notions find their roots in the very early church (c. 150 C.E.) and were known by their Greek terms: *Koinonia* (a welcoming community), *Kerygma* (a word-of-God preaching community), *Leitourgia* (a worshipping community), and *Diakonia* (a community of welfare from which the table-waiters of the Book of Acts got their names as deacons).

cultural dynamics. Here there is the unique interplay between the cultures of the student body, families, and the wider society. I believe that the ideological, philosophical, and theological levels of the models have an ongoing reciprocal relationship that influences the overall culture, ascending and descending (cf. Marsh's 1990 idea of the reciprocal effects of aggregate components of self-concept).

This ongoing topology is the basis for the organizational culture that is at the center of Figure 5 and the core of the Catholic schools' community support culture, which I believe, mitigates the affects of poverty or lack of cultural capital (see Figure 7)

Figure 7. Encapsulated Cultural Capital Bridge in Catholic School Social Phenomena.



that many argue is the source of the achievement gap. Coleman and Hoffer (1987) speak of this notion as characterized by the value of human relationships, especially

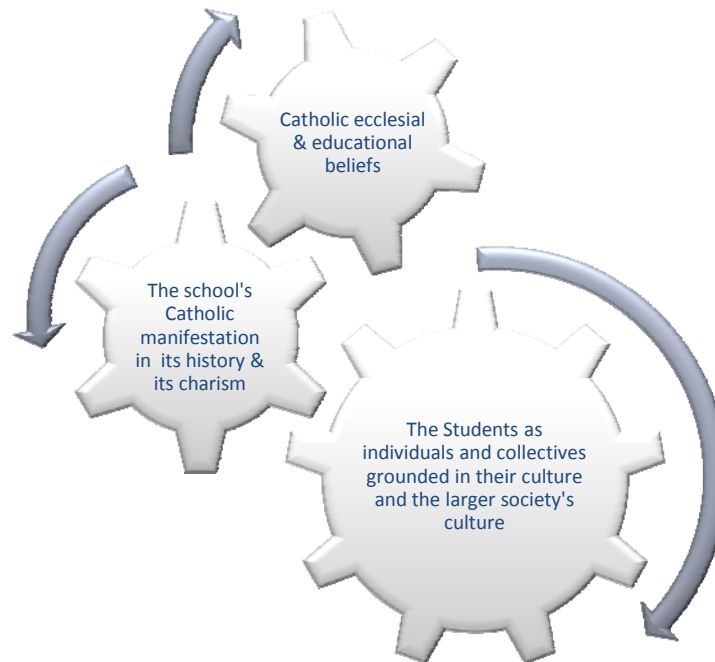
“responsible adults” in a Catholic school (see also Coleman, 1989, p. 232). They argued that social capital is inherent in the structure of the relations between and among students and teachers. I agree. I believe that social capital transmits cultural capital, as cultural capital is encapsulated in social capital. The communal nature and supportive relationships of the Catholic school offers its students, especially those who come from poverty, a means to cross cultures, or acculturate. As a result, this educational process is the great equalizer, a two-way bridge between cultural capitals, from the socially-defined marginalized culture to that which is more mainstream. The bridge, however, must be maintained bidirectional, or this process of education will be a process of cultural genocide. Accordingly, Catholic education seeks to be additive, which is consistent with theological doctrine of the dignity of the human person and of human culture. This dynamic is what I would assert happens in the dynamic of the Catholic common school (see Figure 8) where the lived intellectual and philosophical life of the school intersect with that of the students so as to produce an educational sum greater than the two parts.

For this dynamic, I use as the basis much of the classic work of self-understanding in Mead’s ideas of mind and self (1934/1965). I believe that the formation of the student’s academic self in Catholic school is directly related to the social and intellectual dynamics of the school itself. If a student’s academic self is formed within a Catholic school, it may well be a *Catholic academic self*. Mead posits the importance of social histories and experiences in the formation of his concept of the self and mind. He saw both as a

dynamic creation in which new, more mature realities arise through social discourse.

He believed that the mind was a "social phenomenon--arising and developing within the

**Figure 8. Theorized Dynamic of the Catholic Common School.**



social process, within the empirical matrix of social interactions" (1934/1965, p. 133).

Not only does the mind emerge through such exchange, but also its nature is an internal process of communication, grounded in the utilization of significant symbols. The mind is formed through social interactions with others and self-conversation. Symbols, considered significant only when shared with others, dominate the process. For human beings, the most vital and distinctive symbolic communication is language bound. Or in Mead's words, "out of language emerges the field of mind"<sup>21</sup> (1934/1965, p. 133).

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<sup>21</sup> It is little wonder that Sapir, Whorf, and Mead were contemporaries. The similarity in their shared formational power of symbolic language to the individual and culture is unmistakable. Personally, I

For Mead (1934/1965), the concept of mind as process rather than product means that consciousness is not a simple captive of external forces. Rather, it is an active and creative force constantly changing and growing. The mind is not merely a vessel into which information and experience are indiscriminately poured. Nor does its nature simply reflect an imitation of the behavior of others or fixed responses (whether learned or instinctual) to external prompts. The mind is integrative, comparing, and finding order and meaning in social reality. The process is one by which the mind selectively sifts through an ongoing stream of signals and, in the process, forms relevant "definitions of the situation." It is ultimately constructivist in nature. For my purpose, this sifting and selecting dynamic in the self-formation is all ultimately socially based.

Very similar to this notion of the mind is Mead's idea of the self. Moreover, at times, they appear indistinguishable. The self also "arises in social experience," that can be thought of as "an object to itself," and possesses a "social structure" (Mead 1934/1965, p. 140). This suggests that individuals can conceive of their own experience and being, which they can then convert into identity and forms of consciousness. This dynamic and reality is, in part, what Dubois (1903/1994) means when he discusses the "double conscience." Dubois (1903/1994) states:

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other

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believe that much of the criticism and assaults to Whorf are unwarranted. Neo-Whorfians may yet vindicate his essential ideas.

world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his *twoness* [my emphasis]—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (p. 3).

This process of development of the aggregate personal self has long been part of developmental psychology. This social development is integral to the development of the self.

Mead argues that the self is best thought of as a process. The self is a process of mirrored interaction, symbolic meaning, and accepting the roles of others, which is done, for Mead, in developmental<sup>22</sup> order. This ongoing process has two distinct outcomes. The first is the interdependent action as a dynamic assessment of the self relative to an individual situation. In the second, the dynamic produces an "organized set of attitudes of others" (1934/1965, p. 175). It is important to remember that this formative catalyst is not merely symbolic input (language) but also historical,

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<sup>22</sup> I think that the developmental work of Piaget can offer insight into this evolving social process. Piaget's self developmentally evolves from the child's first stage, egocentrism, where the child and the world are the same, to a more social reality. Flavell (1963) states that "Initially ... the infant knows neither self nor world as distinct and differentiated entities; he [sic] experiences only a *mélange* of feelings and perceptions ... Knowledge of self and knowledge of objects are thus the dual resultants of the successive differentiation and equilibration of the invariant functions which characterized sensory-motor development" (pp. 61-62). I would argue that from the first cognition of life, the child is within symbolic interaction with others, from the first moments of tactile stimulation and nurturance of the mother, family interaction, language instruction, and the early-onset words of 'me' and 'mine'. Note that 'me' and 'mine' are in the dative/objective and genitive cases. The subject case, the 'I,' comes later. The child's first references, after the first other (usually mama) is reactive to the outside world. Self references are not used until much later.



situational, and relational symbolic input that can be as communicative as language itself.

This dynamic of cultural and personal transition, and accompanying possible hegemonic issues of power, dominance, and subservience, can be most clearly seen in terms of language, as all language is social. Bernstein's (1971) theories are concerned with the transmission of "universalistic orders of meaning" to which the middle-class child has commonly, though not invariably, been pre-sensitized. These codes become a "basic organizing concept transmitting the speech patterns of the culture or subculture" (p. 164). In his aptly titled article, *Education Cannot Compensate for Society* (1971), he discusses two codes or forms of language: the elaborated (which he previously called a formal language) and the *restricted* (previously a public language). This is what Bakhtin (see Foley, 1997, p 360) called *heteroglossia*, which describes a social and literary wholeness made on the particularistic elements of the languages of many groups in a culture.

Bernstein (1971) has a highly nuanced cultural difference that is found in the coding backgrounds of groups by their family class levels. This difference is not a deficit by nature, but as deficit understanding, communication, and acceptance by the power culture. Bernstein's point is clear: "one code [language or culturally relative habitus] is not better than another; each possesses its own aesthetic, its own possibilities. Society, however, may place different values on the orders of experience elicited . . . through the different coding systems. (1971, p. 135). Musgrove (1979) states

Language, it is commonly said, is at the very heart of social-class differences in academic attainment. In its very simplest form the argument is that middle-class children are brought up to speak Standard English and find this a great help in their school work, while working-class children are not and in consequence are considerably handicapped. . . . working-class children are seriously disadvantaged because they grow up to speak a less developed, more restricted form of language than middle-class children. . . . (p. 48).

Hart and Risley (2003) have discussed a possible language “impoverishment” of words in the development of poor children in their first three years of life. They report that “poor” children generally hear 30-million fewer words by age three than their more privileged peers do (due to a limited experience of being spoken or read aloud to). When these children start kindergarten, they are already well behind their more affluent peers in terms of vocabulary knowledge. Without effective intervention, this “literacy gap” grows wider as years pass. Musgrove (1979) could agree in that he asserts that “School curricula reflect the highly verbal culture of the middle class. . . .” (p. 51).

Symbolic and linguistic interaction and input is very widespread and diverse; it is both explicit and implicit, public and private. I believe that this process best takes place in a caring and nurturing school. Because of the nature, philosophy, and mission of Catholic schools, especially urban Catholic schools, I believe that this happens at an unprecedented level, which is the mitigating factor in the decrease of the achievement gap. Elements of my discussion of social and communication mitigation can be found in the work of Coleman and Hoffer (1987) and Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993).

Additionally, these notions of positive school climate are tied to student self-concept and self-concept to school achievement (e.g., Brookover, et al, 1979; Brookover & Lezotte, 1977; Cairns, 1987; Freiberg, 1999; Heal, 1978; Rutter, 1983; Rutter, et al., 1979).

To summarize, I contend that there exists in Catholic schools a dynamic of interpersonal relationships and support that is based on the experienced and believed Catholicism of its members, beginning first with the adult staff persons that filters to the students (again see Figures 5 and 6). This dynamic provides a type of *academic press*. Based in the theological stances of community, worship, service, and Gospel message and philosophical requirements of a Catholic school, the adult staff persons have a common understanding of who they are, their deepest mission, and what it means to educate young people. For most of the Catholic school teachers, the role of educator is not merely a job or career. It is a vocation: a call from God based on the discernment of the God-given gifts and ability to teach. Their vocation is tied to their course and path to salvation in the present and may determine that admittance to the afterlife. The Vatican's Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1982) stated:

The teacher under discussion here is not simply a professional person who systematically transmits a body of knowledge in the context of a school; *teacher* [original emphasis] is understood as *educator* [original emphasis]—one who helps to form human persons. The task of a teacher goes well beyond transmission of knowledge, although that is not excluded (*Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*, 1982, para. 16).

The *educator*—a term with the Latin roots *ex ducere* (from/out of and to lead)—draws what is inside the student out, which calls for a very high anthropology. The true person is drawn out<sup>23</sup> in a loving and nurturing context. At the most theological level, the Catholic school teacher sees students as charges from God to be nurtured and cared for. Echoing Scripture (1 Thessalonians 1:3), John Paul II referenced being a teacher in Catholic schools as a “work of faith and a labor of love” (1987, p. 281). In a growing number of inner-city Catholic schools, including the school of this study, much of its self-understanding is based in social justice doctrine and mission to provide quality education in a city where many students and parents feel unable to obtain it. Many urban Catholic schools’ missions are tied to the needs of people. While many Catholic social organizations are tied to medical needs, the needs of children without parents, or the needs of the hungry, much urban education outreach is tied to educational need. It could be viewed—perhaps too simplistically—as a type of educational soup kitchen. The educational outreach differs substantially from, for example, a Jesuit educational institution, whose mission is tied to the Jesuit’s charism or institutional gift. Yet, the end product of quality education, I believe, is not substantially different, notwithstanding a prestige label. This being said, I will turn to a fuller treatment of the ideas and teachings of Catholic education according to the universal and American church, with emphasis on community building and support.

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<sup>23</sup> This is certainly in keeping with the choice theory of Glasser where the *quality school* where affectively warm environments and relationships meet the students needs and cause them to seek learning, because the school, the other students, and especially the teachers are part of the learner’s *quality world*. The Vatican authorities call this affective reality a “civilization of love” (Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, 1982, para. 19).

### *Theory of Catholic Education*

Catholic schools do not constitute a system but a pattern, one in which “all parts have elements in common, but in which each part, and often each school, differs from all others” (Buetow, 1985, p. 1). It is often stated that Catholic schools are not a school system; rather they are a system of schools. That being said, it would be prudent to explore briefly that common thread within Catholic schools. I believe that this thread is Catholic organizational culture. It is, ultimately, the school’s Catholicity, Catholic identity, and Catholicism’s understanding of education.

Much of the self-understanding of the modern Catholic Church, and, in turn, its educational mission, is found in an international meeting of its hierarchy and educated elite that took place in the 1960s called Vatican II. This was a momentous moment<sup>24</sup> for Catholicism, since such a self-examination had not taken place since the sixteenth century. In Vatican II, the whole of the Church was to read the “signs of the time” and “update” itself, known by the Italian term, *aggiornamento* (“bring up to date”). While most Americans note that it changed the language of worship from Latin to the vernacular, it had more far reaching implications toward the place of the laity and ecumenism. It also moved the church from its contentment in being a Eurocentric organization to actually representing what it purported to be, *catholic*, meaning *universal*.

The life of Latin America, Africa, and Asia was represented in a historical first. For this

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<sup>24</sup> It must be stated that the understandings and changes resulting from this time were not universally accepted. Additionally, there have been developments, especially in the last decade, to reconsider some of the “progressive” understandings of Vatican II, for which the election of Benedict XVI offers some validation. Nevertheless, the present state of Catholic education is based on the theological interpretations of Vatican II.

to happen, the Church turned to its roots and its ultimate positive view of the world and humanity — what Niebuhr (1951) called “Christ in culture.” This stands contrary to the Calvinist theology for whom the world was sinful and humanity were wretches — “Christ against culture” (Niebuhr, 1951). The Church was not an institution or building; rather it was remembered as a “pilgrim people” of God, at once holy and sinful. Humanity and all creation were pronounced “good” (Genesis 2.3).

The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1982) in Rome describes the school in virtue of the Church's mission:

The school must be concerned with constant and careful attention cultivating in students the intellectual, creative, and aesthetic faculties of the human person; to develop in them the ability to make correct use of their judgment, will promote in them a sense of values; to encourage just attitudes and prudent behavior; to introduce them to the cultural patrimony handed down from previous generations; to prepare them for professional life; and to encourage the friendly interchange among students of diverse cultures and backgrounds that will lead to mutual understanding (*Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*, 1982, para. 14).

Accordingly, such a worldly undertaking as education and training for life is not a departure from holy or spiritual<sup>25</sup> undertakings. Rather, the journey of all people toward a life befitting their nature—created in the image and likeness of God and,

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<sup>25</sup> It should be pointed out that academic disciplines are taught on their own and not filtered through doctrine, as has happened in some schools (e.g., those based in Biblical Fundamentalism) where scientific theory serves doctrine. Within Catholic schools, individual subjects are taught using their own methodology and never seen as adjuncts of faith or useful means of teaching apologetics.

thereby, imprinted with infinite holiness and goodness—must be lived in the world which is a gift. Therefore, education, in a sanctified here and now, is a means toward good living in a good world by divine mandate.

Therefore, what is the Catholic school? It is an education of the whole person. It is evangelical. It is inclusive. It is communal. It is sponsored by teachers who are motivated by vocation, “called by the grace of God” (John Paul II, 1987, p. 280).

Principally, the National Conference of U.S. Catholic Bishops asserts:

Catholic schools ... are to be communities of faith in which the Christian experience of community, worship, and social concern are integrated in the total experience of students, then parents, and members of the faculty ... It is also widely recognized that Catholic schools are to be communities of faith in which the Christian message, the experience of community, worship, and social concern are integrated in the total experience of students, their parents, and members of the faculty” (*Sharing the Light of Faith*, 1979, para. 9).

The concept of and creation of community is integral to Catholicism and, therefore, to Catholic education. Within Catholicism and therefore the Catholic school, community is the primary structure for as Groom states: “Community is the primary context for ‘being saved’ and ‘becoming human’ (1998, p. 175). Likewise, community is the primary context for education and learning. Community is at the heart of Catholic education. It, however, is not simply a concept to be taught but a reality to be lived (National Conference of U.S Catholic Bishops, *To Teach as Jesus Did*, 1971, para. 23). I believe that the notion of community and of communal support is integral. In this context the staff,

teachers, and students are engaged in an existential search and lived experience of meaning. This community and its support, I believe, mitigate the differences between cultural capital and offers students social capital. Within Catholic schools, students learn better because they are believers within the community. Students are imprinted with the school's openness, cooperation, teamwork, and joy. Students build a *Gemeinschaft*, the community spirit by listening, sharing, trusting, risking, and caring.

Although culture is not a new concept, it shifted to center stage in the 1980's due in large part to the business and organizational theories of Ouchi and Demming and their emphases on relationships and team building (Owens, 2001). These notions include: talking about schools as if they were factories, identifying the characteristics necessary to obtain the desired outputs, talking about schools as if they were families, and stressing the dynamics of caring that ground the kind of positive familial relationships that lead to healthy growth. Moreover, depending on the size of the organization and the degree of departmentalization, multiple cultures may exist (Kilmann Saxton, & Serpa, 1985; Schein, 1985). Large secondary schools may, for example be characterized by multiple cultures whereas a small elementary school may have a single culture. Much of the literature revolves around principal leadership, but I believe that the most basic element is the relationships between students and teachers, and I will concentrate on the climate of the classroom and not the administrative offices.

While many of these tenets of community and local governance are in vogue in the theories of Deming, Senge, etc., Catholic schools tended to resist "fads" in an effort to maintain traditional curriculum and methodology (Baker & Riordan, 1998; Buetow,



1970, 1988). Catholic schools were a bastion of the basics long before “teaching longer and deeper” became a mantra. This slow moving nature is based on the theology and philosophy of the Catholic world and its relationship to community, individualism, realism, and relativism. While the rights of the individual conscience are sacrosanct, consensus, currents of thought, or majority dictums are not inviolate. We need only consider the notion of the “tyranny of the majority.” Whether we see social contract and obligations from Rousseau’s natural state, Hobbes’s “nasty, brutish and short” pandemonium, or Rawls’ original position and veil of ignorance, the common good is the philosophical ground for the right within Catholic philosophy and theology. Right and the most important obligations (deontology) flow from our identity and relatedness usually embedded in nature, reason, and the previous practice of tradition, rather than consensus. Accordingly, change is slow, very slow. This is true within Catholicism’s hierarchical magisterium and the educational system.<sup>26</sup> While that can be very

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<sup>26</sup> This slowness to, if not suspicion of, change can be seen in the 1952 address of the Jesuit President of St. Louis University to the National Catholic Educational Association. In it, he rejects such educational innovations as those attributed to John Dewey. Father Reinert stated:

There is a second added responsibility peculiar to our times. Catholic schools are part and parcel of the general educational world today and we are affected by our educational environment more perhaps than we suspect. Often the influence of other types of schools is beneficial; sometimes it is detrimental. One of the latter has been the influence of what has well been characterized as ‘soft pedagogy,’ the theory fathered chiefly by John Dewey which insists that anything like difficulty, pain, unpleasantness must be completely eradicated from the learning process. In an article in America last November [1951], Father Donovan put it thus: ‘We have practically adopted as a national educational motto: ‘If it isn’t easy, it isn’t educational.’ Our Catholic educational psychology, recognizing the implications of man’s fallen and redeemed nature, must never abandon the dictum that will be true for all time: *‘Knowledge maketh a bloody entrance’* [my emphasis and generally attributed to Shakespeare]. Hence, Catholic education must set its teeth against the too numerous manifestations of softness in today’s schools: abandonment of homework, over-emphasis on spread and neglect of depth in curriculum content, disregard of the disciplinary and integrating values especially in such basic subjects as English, foreign languages, mathematics, and science. We must be just as eager as the most rabid instrumentalist to make our children love to learn, but this is accomplished by enthusiastic teaching, by good instructional methods, by engendering proper motivation, not by watering down the content of our curriculum, nor by becoming sentimental about over-exerting our students’ mental capacities.

perplexing to modern Americans, the stability is also something comforting. Within education, that has been an appeal to the basics over trends. At the onset of the whole language movement and the disdain for phonetics, it was the Catholic Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Cleveland who was one of the first to attempt to stem the tide (see Flesch, 1955). While the trend seemed inevitable, it now has run its course.

### *Significance of the Study*

The present study offers a unique opportunity to investigate both the racial/ethnic achievement gap and the research into Catholic school effectiveness. The following are the unique situations:

1. The school offers a site of generally economically homogeneous students in a comprehensive multicultural/multiracial school, which spans special education classes to college preparatory honors classes;
2. Cleveland Central Catholic's minority population consists not only of a large African American (59%) population but also of a large number of Hispanic (12%) students. Generally, Catholic educational literature merely treats Hispanic students with demographic statistics. The discussion of Hispanic students in Catholic schools and the related "minority" achievement gap is almost nonexistent. Even when treated explicitly in the general educational literature, it

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Catholic schools are traditionally hesitant to absorb modern educational theories, and just as hesitant to abandon old ones. We must make sure that to whatever extent we have been slowly influenced by 'soft pedagogy' we are not equally slow in rejecting its infiltration (Reinert, 1952, n.p.).

While this diatribe from 50-plus years ago is harsh by anyone's estimate, there are kernels of contemporary school reform present. Accordingly, some have praised Catholic schools' maintenance of the basics when some educational innovations were accused of sidetracking American's children.

is often only in terms of dropout rates. This present study has the potential to further academic achievement findings for students from two minority populations;

3. The school offers an unprecedented amount of demographic and academic measurements (e.g., entrance and later standardized testing, GPAs; self-reported achievement, house-hold financial indicators; enrollment statistics in the Cleveland Voucher Program; and SES measurements);
4. The study offers the use of a tested measurement of student climate within this population (Hollis, 2006) from which to base its measurements and findings;
5. The study involves an in-house (emic) researcher, who has taught in urban Catholic schools with 20 years and who was educated primarily in Catholic schools;
6. Students have variable amounts of Catholic school background and training so as to possibly examine variable levels of a Catholic school effect.

This study seeks to merge examinations of the achievement gap with issues of Catholic school effect and the importance of affective and interpersonal relationships. If this study replicates my findings (Hollis, 2006) with further indices and measurements of racial and ethnic equalities based on Catholic social climate and school community effect, strong arguments can be made for the importance of affect and community elements as mitigating components to the achievement gap—which is perhaps the most serious educational danger that the United States faces with serious social and economic issues that will reach far into the future.

### *Definitions*

Most important terms and concepts are provided within the theoretical context of this paper. The following, however, may be useful for additional clarification:

1. ***Academic Achievement:*** Within this study, academic achievement is defined as student performance in the classroom (Grade Point Average-GPA) and scores obtained on criteria-referenced tests (e.g., Ohio Graduation Test) and norm-referenced tests (e.g., Iowa Tests).
2. ***Academic Press.*** The term "academic press" does not mean "pressure." Press means focusing students' attention on genuine learning (rather than simply going through the motions). Teachers "press" students to learn by encouraging them, by paying attention to their work and giving constructive feedback, by not accepting low or half-hearted effort, by holding them accountable, by providing assistance when they need it, and by not giving up on them. Simply having informal conversations with students about college and career goals is a form of academic press.
3. ***Catholic:*** Is an adjective used to describe that which is related to the group of Christian churches or rites that are in communion with the Bishop of Rome (the Pope), which includes Roman (Western European), Coptic (Egyptian), Byzantine (Greek), Maronite (Lebanese), etc., Catholics. Within the area of this study, the Diocese (a local administrative region) of Cleveland encompasses eight counties in Northeast Ohio and includes the metropolitan areas of Cleveland and Akron. The diocese owns and operates seven Catholic high schools, which includes the

school in this study.

4. ***Catholic education:*** This pertains to schools that have historical, philosophical, or religious schools within the Catholic Church. Catholic schools are not a monolith (again, see Appendix E). There are wide varieties: *Diocesan owned and operated* Catholic schools that are directly under the jurisdiction and control of the local bishop; *Religious Schools* that are under the ownership and authority of a religious community of brothers, sisters, and/or priests; *Independent Schools* that may have a Catholic history but are operated by a board of non-religious laypersons; *Parochial Catholic Schools* that are under the jurisdiction of a local church/parish and that church's pastor. These are usually elementary schools. Recently there is a newer phenomenon of *inter-parochial schools* where several parishes jointly manage one school. In each case there is some tie to the local bishop, but their instructional authority is granted by the state and a statewide Catholic educational accreditation organization.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, these schools usually have some special emphasis or charism based on their history or background (e.g., college preparatory of a particular religious order of priests, sisters, or brothers; vocational training; outreach to a specific population or persons with disabilities; social justice opportunities in the inner city).

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<sup>27</sup> There is a new phenomenon known as the "religious sponsored" school. These are basically formerly religious community's schools in transition. Accordingly, a religious community entrusts the financial domain of the school to a board of directors while maintaining the control of the school's mission and daily operation. These boards may, or may not, purchase the property from the religious community. This type of school is as unique and varied as the school's specific setting of its former religious community and its board of directors.

5. **Charism.** There is a variety of meaning for this word, which is derived from the Greek, *charis*, meaning “grace” or “gift.” Within this paper, it means the original grace, gift, or orientation of a religious community and its religious founder/foundress. In some cases it can be synonymous with mission. While usually traced back to a religious community’s origins and rule (bylaws), its interpretation and understanding are in a process of continuous updating to meet changing demands of society, the Church, and the community. It becomes foundational to the group’s ministry, for example the scope of educational work for those orders who operate or govern particular schools. Some schools which are not operated directly by religious communities might also speak of having a charism, meaning purpose or mission (see Grace, 2002).<sup>28</sup>
6. **Choice Theory:** Originally called “[internal] control theory,” choice theory is the life and educational theory mainly attributed to William Glasser (1969, 1984, 1988, 1992, 1993, 1997a, 1997b, 1998, 2000, 2004) that is contrary to behavioral stimulus/response theory. Glasser believes that control comes from within the person based on basic needs and the construction of a *quality world* that encapsulates all that is important. These components are usually relationally oriented. Failure, or disengagement, in school happens when the student says to

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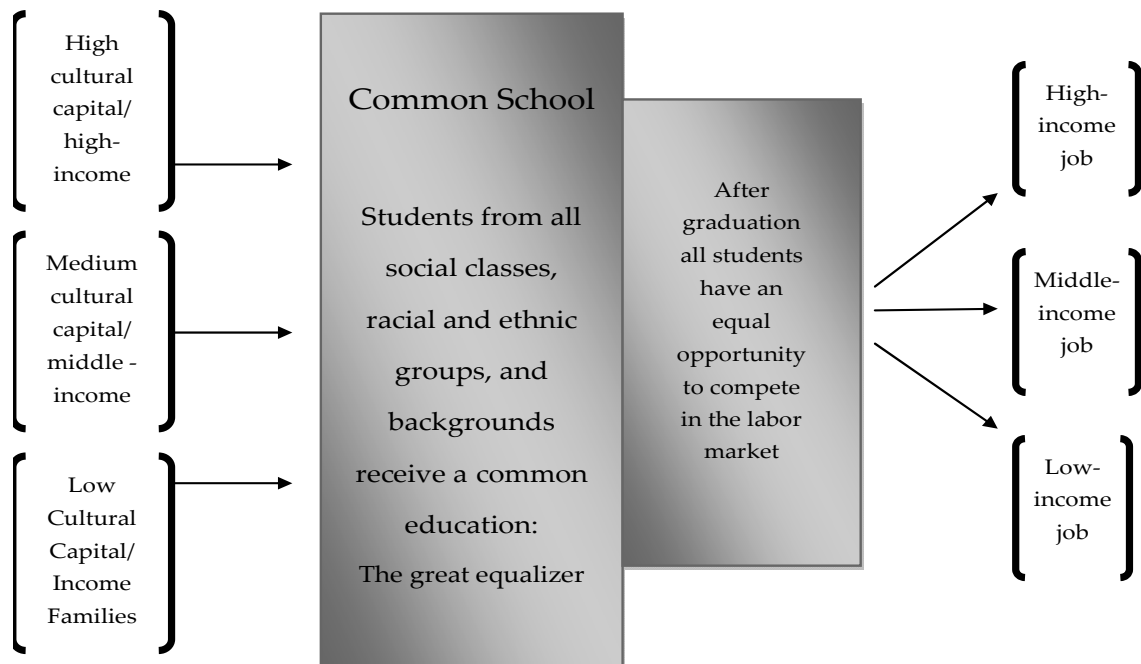
<sup>28</sup> Two good examples the school mission being informed by charism are cited by Grace (2002) in the mission statements of a Jesuit school and Sisters of Notre Dame school. Respectively, their mission statements read: “Jesuit education is inspired by the vision of St. Ignatius Loyola in which God reveals his love for us in all things. The aim of Jesuit education is the formation of people of competence, conscience, and compassion, who are men and women for others”; and “Despite the turbulent educational world in which we find ourselves at this time, we. . . maintain a stance of optimism, hope and good humour. Inspired by St. Julie’s words, ‘Ah, Qu’il est bon, le bon Dieu’ [Oh, how good is the good God], we believe that . . . we will experience a determination to achievement and be blessed with success” (p. 130).

herself, "I do so little in school because no one cares for me, no one listens to me, it's no fun, they try to make me do things I don't want to do, and they never try to find out what I want to do" (Glasser, 1997a, p. 598). Accordingly, quality schools cannot happen until students know and feel appreciated and motivated within a warm interpersonal climate. Glasser writes that the "West must replace these destructive behaviors with choosing to care, listen, support, negotiate, encourage, love, befriend, trust, accept, welcome, and esteem. These words [cf. rewards and punishments] define the difference between external control psychology and choice theory" (1998, p. 21). Glasser has demonstrated how student motivation is connected to the student's assessment of her needs. He categorizes needs into survival, love, power, fun, and freedom. Glasser argued that when students were in control of meeting their needs, they would commit to learning. He linked this motivational approach with the idea of 'continual improvement' thereby focusing the learning task on finding ways to use the subject matter to continually improve the students' ability to satisfy their needs. In short, climates that ignore student needs are perceived as threatening (to the students' desire to meet their needs).

7. ***Common School:*** Speaking historically, Tyack (2003) states that, "[t]he common school, a public institution that mixed students from all walks of life, was to teach a common denominator of political and moral truths that was nonpartisan and nonsectarian (p. 20). Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) put the origins of the common school somewhat more polemical: "America's social elite [which were

White Anglo-Saxon Protestant] saw the common schools as socializing foreigners whose presence might otherwise be threatening . . .” (pp. 24-25). In a more modern notion, the common school is again the great equalizer that “raises all boats” (see Figure 9). Spring (2002) states that, “children from all social

Figure 9. Dynamic of the Theoretical Common School.



Source: adapted from Spring, 2002, p. 72

backgrounds enter the common school and receive a common education. The social starting line for competition of jobs and status begins at the point of graduation. . . . Theoretically, all graduates have an equal chance to compete because they have received an equal education” (p. 71).

8. **Habitus:** This is a mental and lived frame of reference from which individuals reason and act, akin to a worldview. Bourdieu (1977) defines the habitus as a



“way of being,” a set of “dispositions,” a tendency,” an “inclination” toward certain practices learned at an unaware level due to the social positioning of groups of people produced historically (p. 83). In addition, he says that habitus is a “matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions” produced historically and reproduced individually and “naturalized” and experienced as a “taken-for-granted.” Webb, Schirato, & Danaher (2002) state the following: “Habitus can be understood as, on the one hand, the historical and cultural production of individual practices—since contexts, laws, rules, and ideologies all speak through individuals, who are never entirely aware that this is happening—and, on the other hand, the individual production of practices—since the individual always acts from self-interest” (p. 15). Habitus is posited as representing various class-stratified, taken-for-granted, and structured symbolic systems. Habitus inhabits the collective unconscious established generative guidelines and boundaries on individuals and collective action. Among the most important functions of habitus is to identify the relative status and symbolic relationships differentiating various class and social position. To be identified, and to identify with a particular class one must have acquired, through socialization in families, schools, and elsewhere, the symbolic and cultural capital associated with that class (Johnston, 2007). Accordingly, the notions of culture and social capital are associated with the lived reality of people, conscious and unconscious. Habitus is learned in families and is often part of the “cultural continuity” that underlies the structure of school experiences (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 87).

9. *OGT*: Beginning with the class of 2007 and the year of this study, all students were required to pass the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) in order to receive a standard high school diploma. It replaced the earlier Ohio Proficiency Tests, which were taken usually in the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade, but Ohio Catholic schools took these tests in the eighth grade. Like the Ohio Proficiency Tests, the OGTs are criterion-reference in the areas of Reading, Writing, Social Studies, Math, and Science. Both public and Catholic high school students take the OGT in the tenth grade. The OGT results for each subtest are defined into five categories: limited (not passing), basic (not passing), proficient (passing), accelerated (passing), and advanced (passing). The exact raw score and normalized percentiles for these criteria vary with the administration year. The test has ongoing continuous normalizing. So as to be consistent, I will use the criterion given the test when my participants took the tests during their sophomore year.

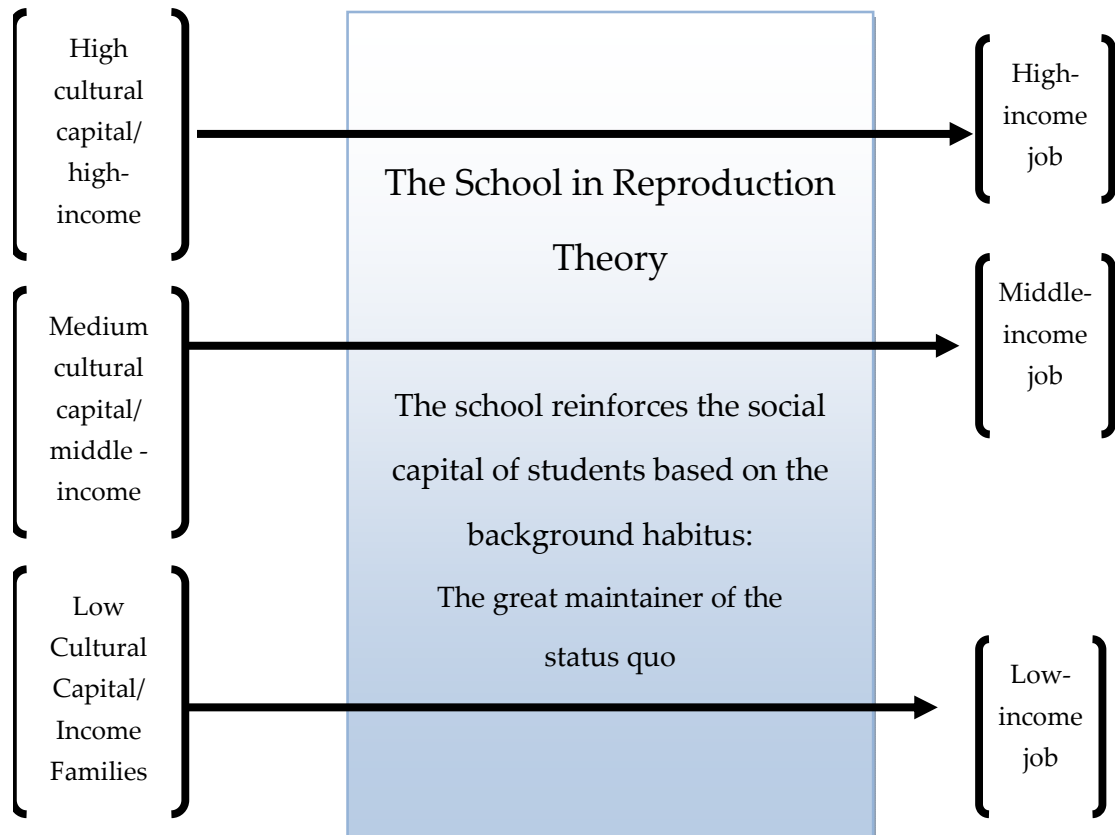
10. *Reproduction Theory*: Reproduction theory is based primarily on the works of Bourdieu (1990) and his concepts of *habitus*, *cultural capital*, and *symbolic violence* (see Figure 11). This theory runs contrary to the idea of the school as the “great equalizer”<sup>29</sup> by providing a level playing field where the “low and the mighty [based on their background or habitus] compete on an equal basis, school

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<sup>29</sup> This phrase has often been attributed to the American educational system until the late 1960s. Greer (1972), however, attributes notion as being the “great school legend” and never accurate. Greer opines that a high percentage of classroom failure was necessary to the functioning of the American system. Accordingly, teachers have been agents of a capitalist society by which they ensure that a good share of the student body fail in order to provide a steady supply of workers for the laboring class, while others are marked for power and success (see also Crookson & Persell, 1985). Accordingly, Greer asserts that American schooling throughout its history has never been a meritocracy. Rather from the time of Jefferson, it has been source of social reproduction.

renders social inequality superfluous” (MacLeod, 1995, p. 11). Reproduction

Figure 10. The Dynamic of the School According to Reproduction Theory.



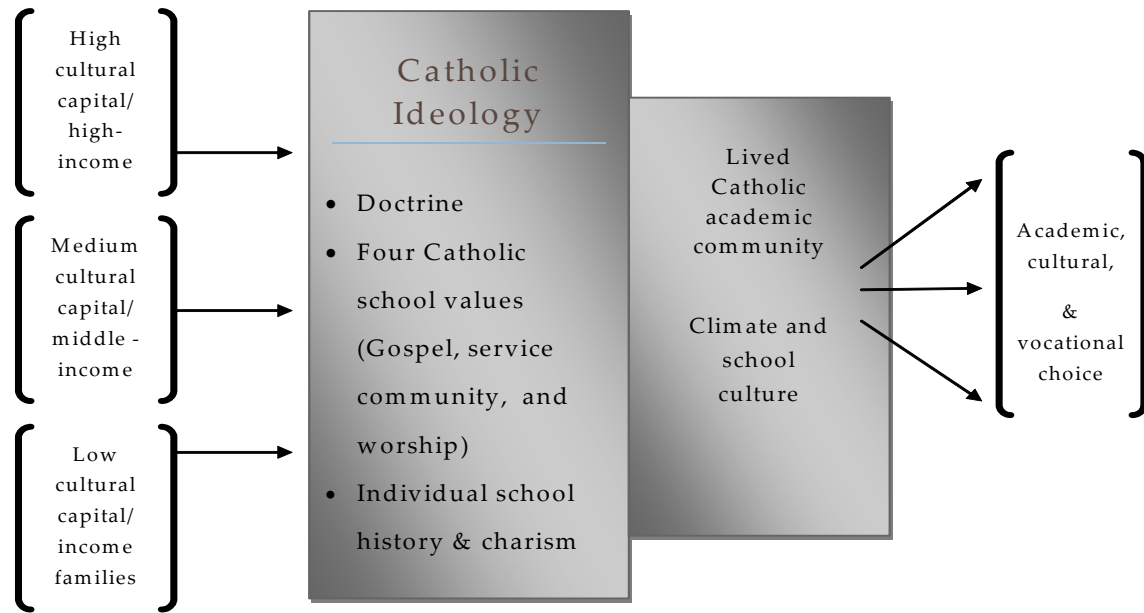
Source: Adapted from Figure 9

theory asserts that schools actually reinforce social inequality by means of symbolic violence while pretending to do the opposite. Accordingly, children learn from their surroundings (habitus) through observation and listening, “proper”<sup>30</sup> ways of looking at the world, ways of moving (bodily habits),

<sup>30</sup> While terms can be used to demarcate this culture/class difference, I prefer to use the term “prestige” as it is used in language studies to discuss difference in dialect over such expressions as “highbrow,” “genteel,” or “déclassé.” Minority groups also have terms for nonstandard cultural capital, e.g., “ghetto boy” or

manners of eating, response to correction and confrontation, social interactions, linguistic register and volume, and other ways of acting. This learning and, in turn, behavior is cultural capital. Within societies, there are multiple cultural

Figure 11. Model of Catholic Common School's Reproduction Mitigation.



capitals, with the dominant, hegemonic culture in the ascendance. This is the implicit hidden curriculum that schools tend to reinforce as the basis for learning. Students who do not know this culture from the onset are behind and are foreigners in their own country (see Giroux, 1997; Jenkins, 2002; Reed-Danahay, 2005). Social capital is often used interchangeably with cultural capital. Hoy, Tarter, and Kottkamp (1991), however, offer a very useful pithy distinction: "... culture consists of the shared assumptions and ideologies, while

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"ghetto girl" (meaning loud and attention seeking) among African Americans and "común y corriente" (meaning common and low class) among Mexicans to only name a few.

social is defined by shared perceptions of behavior” (p. 7). This distinction serves well whenever considering the terms and the nuances between them.

11. ***Voucher Program.*** Known officially as the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program, the voucher program was established in April of 1995. On a lottery basis and contingent on family income, the voucher program offered financial assistance to the family of any child who resides in the Cleveland City School District and who was enrolled in grades K-3 at any private or religious school. The assistance had a base amount of \$2,500, and student’s families received money at either 75% or 90% level of that amount, depending on the family’s income. After 1995, the program’s financial awards followed the students as they increased in grade level. The original third-grade cohort reached high school in 2001. In the year of the study, 2006-2007, the base amount had risen to \$3,450, which meant that student families receive 90% or 75% (\$3,105 or \$2,587.50, respectively) of that base amount. Cleveland Central Catholic High School’s voucher students numbered 63 students at the 75% level and 213 students at the 90% levels, which included students of all high school grades. The total number of students who participated in the voucher program was approximately 61% of the whole student body and voucher moneys awarded to Cleveland Central Catholic totaled \$862,000 (Stephens, 2007), making it the second largest recipient of voucher money in the district after Metro Catholic Elementary Schools’ payment of \$1,256,000. Parents paid, or found other financial assistance to pay, the remainder of the total tuition cost of \$5,800 for the year of the study.

12. *Whiteness*. Whiteness is a social and cultural capital that is possessed in the American dominant culture. It originates historically in White (especially Anglo-Saxon Protestant) wealth and privilege, but it is not transferred biologically. DiAngelo (2006) argues that it is this Whiteness social production that hampers students of color an equal opportunity to learn in U.S. schools and elevates the position of White students. Frankenberg (1993) defines Whiteness as multidimensional: Whiteness is a location of structural advantage, or race privilege. It is a “standpoint,” a place from which White people look at themselves, others, and at society. Whiteness refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed. It generates norms and references points, ways of conceptualizing the world, and ways of thinking about oneself and others—a worldview.

“We leaders of Catholic schools believe that our schools are a great gift to our church and a great gift to our nation. Our convictions are supported by facts and faith. ... Catholic schools are deeply rooted in the life of the church, the body of Jesus Christ, who is the source of all life. Catholic schools draw their life's breath from their roots in the Catholic community and they, in turn, breathe new life into the church. Catholic schools are proud and productive partners in American education. At this moment in history, Catholic schools are no longer a small number of outposts offering separation and security in a hostile culture, but a vast network of institutions lighting the lives of the community they serve in every corner of the land. Today, our Catholic schools are a beacon of hope for many, especially the poor, and a powerful model for those who are working to redefine and rebuild American education.”

NCEA National Conference. *Catholic Schools for the 21st Century: Executive Summary, Prologue* (quoted in Guerra, Haney, & Kealey, 1992, p. 15).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### *Development of the American Catholic System of Schools*

According to tradition, the educational mission of the Catholic Church has its foundation in the person of Jesus, who was known as “teacher” and “rabbi,” and his mandate to “go out and teach<sup>31</sup> all nations” (Mt. 28:19). From the earliest times, the sharing of the Good News had an instructional component called the catechumenate, which was a period of instruction before a would-be Christian could be baptized. After the official recognition of Christianity in Europe and the common practice of infant baptism, the Church’s instructional practice took the form of monastic schools, followed by cathedral schools and universities, followed by charity schools. Catholic education was given a great impetus after the Protestant Reformation, as much of the abuse within the institutional church was rightly attributed to lack of education by both the laity and the clergy. Accordingly, The

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<sup>31</sup> This phrase is based on the 1610 mistranslation of the Douay-Rheims Version of the New Testament (1582) of St. Jerome’s *Biblia Sacra Vulgata* (382-405 C.E.): *euntes ergo docete [imperative mood—teach you all!] omnes gentes baptizantes eos in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti docentes [teaching] eos servare omnia quaecumque mandavi vobis* (Mt. 28:19).



Council of Trent (1545-1563) that met primarily to respond to the Reformation gave great importance to reforms that had as its center intellectual formation and education.

When Christians flocked from Europe to the new world, they carried a flag for their king and a cross for their church, with tripartite goals of gold, glory, and God. Along with the adventurers and gold seekers, there were families to colonize the vast new territory and religious men and women to preach the word of God and open schools. The Spanish Southwest and Florida and French Louisiana were mainly Catholic. Missionaries walked with the *conquistadores* and explorers. One built churches and schools while the other built forts and outposts of Western civilization.

The opening of Anglo-America, however, introduced a more religiously heterogeneous population that the old tenet of political-religious determination<sup>32</sup> could not remedy. Short-lived religious toleration in Maryland and Pennsylvania ended in America with the repercussions of England's Glorious Revolution in 1689 and the subsequent 1702 passage of anti-Catholic laws. These laws excluded Catholics from many civil liberties and prevented them from holding office. The majority Irish Catholic population and its majority Irish-American hierarchy were highly distrustful of English government due to its past treatment of Catholics in Ireland. The Irish Catholic migrants of America could not forget<sup>33</sup> the English atrocities in Ireland, for instance,

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<sup>32</sup> The 1555 Peace of Augsburg issued a political end for most of the religious wars of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century with its famous *cuius regio eius religio* (whose realm, his religion). This predominately German solution was, however, less functional in Anglo territories.

<sup>33</sup> Writing as evenhandedly as possible on highly emotionally charged issues of English atrocities in Ireland, Wheeler (1999) states, "Although there is debate about the exact numbers of deaths . . . [t]he memory of the deaths has haunted Anglo-Irish relations ever since" (p. 227).

capital punishment for Catholic religious education to name only one (see Fernández-Suárez, 2006; Wheeler, 1999). Before there were such names as Hitler, Stalin, and Pol Pot, there was the English Puritan, Cromwell, whose tales were well known to the Irish immigrants. Even when religious discrimination was not *de jure* in the new nation, Catholics still harbored distrust for the majority of elected officials who were still sectarian Protestant by breeding and culture.

America grew, and the colonies became states. Isolated farms became towns and then cities. The population grew rapidly. The states became a country, but it was a Protestant country with the belief that America was sent forth on a mission from God (see Hughes, 2003). It had an evangelical mission for which Catholics were not a part. In the “City on a Hill,” as the United States was known, there was the common school that was to inculcate in the “unwashed masses” a culture that was White, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant. This common school was the site of civic and religious evangelization—that is, “America was literally, God’s country, the place He had chosen for the regeneration of mankind” (Tyack, 2003, p. 44).

American education was founded in religious schools. In the Old Deluder Act of 1647, the Massachusetts Puritans mandated the education of children, because their Puritan fathers and mothers considered ignorance Satan's weapon to keep them from the knowledge of Scripture. What were the causes of that shift from private to public education? It is impossible to review the period in question and fail to conclude that the drive for public education was largely a response to the huge influx of poor, non-Protestant immigrants. The distinction between private and

public schools was not crystallized until the "school wars" of the 1840s, which officially ended the use of public funds in the support of Catholic schools, especially in New York (Browne, 1953; Bryk, Lee, & Holland 1993; Ravitch & Viteritti, 2000).

The ideology of the textbooks was clear and it taught the Catholic child that "Catholics are necessarily, morally, intellectually, infallibly, a stupid race" (quoted in Tyack, 1974, p. 85). Another textbook announced that the Irish immigration could make America "'the common sewer of Ireland,' full of drunken and depraved Paddies" (quoted in Tyack, 1974, p. 85). Hence, it could be argued that Catholics within the common school were an "abused minority." Horace Mann's common school concept in Massachusetts and the secularization of American education sought to create a non-denominational Protestant school. Rose (1988) calls Mann's secularization a "farce—the schools employed Protestant hymns, prayers, and the King James Bible. It was in response to such non-neutrality that the Catholic parochial system was established" (p. 29). Tyack (2003) states that, "[t]he pan-Protestantism of the common schools looked like a religious establishment to Catholics" (p. 169). The xenophobia brought on by the increased immigration of the nineteenth century brought groups, such as the Nativists and Know Nothings, legally, physically, and socially assailing Catholic immigrants. One editor wrote that "a Romanist minority, trained by nuns and priests . . . furnishes the majority of our criminals" (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993, p. 23). These opinions were not restricted to the Eastern seaboard. In 1868, the *Chicago Evening Post* wrote: "Scratch a convict, or a pauper and the chances are that you tickle the skin of an Irish Catholic ... made a criminal or a pauper by the priest and politicians who have deceived him and

kept him in ignorance, in a word, a savage, as he was born" (quoted in McCaffrey, 1992, p. 1).

Accordingly, from 1829 to 1884, the American Catholic bishops urged parishes to open schools to maintain the faith and to protect the children from psychological and physical violence. Within this venue John Hughes, the first Archbishop of New York City who held office from 1840-1864, proclaimed that the Catholics should "build the schoolhouse first, and the church afterwards" (quoted in Dolan, 1985, p. 263). Finally in 1884, the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore mandated that each pastor of Catholic churches in the United States build a school for each parish.<sup>34</sup>

The impetus for the growth of Catholic Schools in America was certainly contributed to by a besieged mentality. In no other country in the world has the Catholic community formed such a massive amount of educational infrastructure. Cultural and religious besiegement was a factor, but it was not the sole reason. We should remember the education dynamics of Catholic culture which were the roots of Western civilization. A condition is not always the cause. In 1884, American Archbishop James Gibbons of Baltimore expressed the nobler reasons for Catholic school building as follows: "Popular education has always been a chief object of the Church's care," he said, adding, "It is not too much to say that the history of the Church's work is the history of civilization and education" (quoted in McQuaid,

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<sup>34</sup> Some believe that Catholicism entered the mainstream of American life with the election of John F. Kennedy to the United States Presidency, but there has been ongoing discussion to the present about continued discrimination of people whose surnames end with a vowel (typified by Catholic Hispanics, Italians, and Eastern Europeans), especially within the university and intellectual elites (see Alba & Abdel-Hady, 2005).

1885, p. 133). He recalled how after the fall of the Roman Empire the church brought literacy back to Europe through local schools and universities throughout Europe (see Cahill, 1995). He exhorted the American Catholic community, stating that all these historical efforts testify to the church's quest for,

. . . the beauty of truth and knowledge that enlarges [humanity's] capacity both for self-improvement and for promoting the welfare of our fellow-man [and woman]. Education must make a person "not only clever but good. . . . True civilization requires that not only the physical and intellectual, but also the moral and religious well-being of the people should be improved (quoted in McQuaid, 1885, p. 135).

These words do not appear to be those of someone who was merely founding an educational movement based solely to protect a people or children against cultural and ethnic besiegement.

Whatever the ultimate reasons, the American Catholic community heard the educational call and established an unprecedented educational system. In 1785 the Catholic population in the United States was estimated at 25,000 and it quadrupled to 100,000 by 1850 (Carey, 2004). Between 1820 and 1870, five million German and Irish Catholics arrived in the United States (Walsh, 2003). Between the years 1880 and 1920, the Catholic population increased 300%, from 6,000,000 to 17,735,553 (Hunt, 2004). During the same time, Catholic school attendance increased 400%, from 400,000 to 1,701,219 (Hunt, 2004). By 1920, there were 6,551 elementary schools and 1,552 secondary schools. In the 1960s, Catholic education reached its enrollment

pinnacle. In 1965, Catholic schools enrolled 5,481,325 students in 10,879 elementary schools and 2,413 secondary schools (McDermott, 1997). This constituted 12% of the U.S. student population (Marks, 2002) and approximately 44% of school-aged children of the Catholic population (Greeley, McCready, & McCourt, 1976).

### *Catholic Schools at the Crossroads*

The 1960s marked the highest numbers of students in Catholic elementary and secondary schools. Due to a wide number of factors, not least among them including housing migration patterns of Catholics and fluctuation in religion observances, the attendance of Catholic schools shifted. As stated above, the number of minority parents, especially in urban neighborhoods, has increased the enrollment of their children in parochial schools. In 1970-1971, the percent of African Americans<sup>35</sup> increased from 5% to 9% in 1987-1988. During the same period, the proportion of Hispanic students doubled, increasing from 5-to-10%, and the proportion of Asians, while still small, tripled from 1-to-3% (Marks, 2002). In 1969, approximately 120,000 non-Catholic students attended Catholic elementary and

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<sup>35</sup> Running contrary to American national currents in 1947, desegregation of Catholic schools for African Americans was established by Archbishop Ritter in St. Louis who unilaterally outlawed segregated Catholic schools. When the Supreme Court was considering *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), Chief Justice Warren visited Washington D.C.'s Archbishop O'Boyle to inquire as to Catholic education's experience of integration (Kealey, 1994). Prior to that time and to meet the social justice demands of the right to education, Catholic organizations opened 76 schools in the United States for the education of African Americans between the years 1890 and 1917 (Benson et al., 1986). In the year 1940, approximately 40,000 African American students were being educated in Catholic institutions mainly in the South. Religious orders were founded specifically to minister to the African American population: Josephite Fathers, Mission Helpers, Servants of the Sacred Heart, and Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. In this vein, it is particularly interesting to note the work of Katharine Drexel (1858-1955)—banking heiress turned nun and recently canonized saint in the Catholic Church in 2000—who dedicated her life and fortune to work with African Americans and Native Americans (see Davis, 1990; and Manning & Rogers, 2002).

secondary schools, which grew to 321,000 students in 1982 (Covey, 1992). This dynamic increase would not continue, but the percentages were significant as the total number of students attending Catholic schools would decrease in succeeding decades. Again as stated above, the 2006-2007 enrollment statistics indicated that Catholic schools continued to serve minority students and newly-arrived immigrants, as well as mainstream White Catholic and non-Catholic students. Of the 2.3 million students, (about 5% of the U.S. school population), minorities comprised 25.7% of this number while non-Catholics consisted of 13.8% of the total enrollment. Catholic educational institutions are still 31.8% urban with 11.8% found in the inner city (McDonald, 2006).

These urban schools are, however, closing at alarming numbers despite recent governmental financial assistance and promises of more in the future. Declining parish revenues in poorer neighborhoods, older physical facilities, reliance on traditional fundraising (e.g., bingo), increasing salaries for lay teachers, and the inability to pass on educational costs in the form of tuition to parents of humble incomes, etc., have caused the death toll for many schools. Grogger and Neal (2000) reported that between the years 1974 and 1999 that 28% of the Catholic high schools closed, with the highest percentages being in larger cities. For many of these schools, the promised governmental assistance will be too little too late.

Catholic schools are not merely schools teaching religious education. These are comprehensive schools teaching all areas of current curriculum. Accordingly, Catholic schools are an important arm in the Church's work for social justice. In areas where

there are no, or few, quality schools, it is its mission to be a quality school for those who cannot obtain one otherwise. Speaking specifically to Catholic educators, John Paul II (1987) stated that,

Often today Catholic education takes place in changing neighborhoods; it requires respect for cultural diversity, love for those of different ethnic backgrounds, service to those in need, without discrimination. Help your students to see themselves as members of the universal church<sup>36</sup> and the world community. Help them to understand the implications of justice and mercy. Foster in your students a social consciousness which will move them to meet the needs of their neighborhoods and to discern and seek to remove the sources of injustice in society. No human anxiety or sorrow should leave the disciples of Jesus Christ indifferent (para. 9).

As Catholics in the last decades have made great progress financially and have moved to outer suburbs, some quite affluent (Greeley, 1977; Riordan, 2000), the mission to keep alive these schools in the inner city has been generally maintained, though the future is uncertain.

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<sup>36</sup> I should point out that in the post-Vatican II Church, there is a tenet termed the “anonymous Christian” which has its origin in the work of Karl Rahner. Accordingly, Christianity and salvation can be obtained without some of the traditional trappings of explicit church membership or even Baptism. While under reconsideration and debate presently, this understanding of various faiths in the Catholic schools is important. As a former high school campus minister, my understanding of evangelization was to spread the good news. Therefore, the Baptist, Catholic, or Jew who were part of my school would leave my religious and ministry lessons a better Baptist, Catholic, or Jew, respectively. At first, this is difficult to understand, since the doctrinal and religious educational pronouncements seem so emphatic. There are, however, “hierarchies of truth” that is explicitly understood in Vatican II’s discussions of ecumenism (see Vatican II, 1966, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, para. 11).



The Catholic school is to announce the Good News of Christ, and because of Him, the Good News of who the students are as human beings. It is not to indoctrinate with another religion, mind, culture,<sup>37</sup> or ideology, but to announce that which is “nearer to them than they are to themselves,” according to St. Augustine. Proselytizing intrudes into another’s religious freedom and spiritual life and pushes or bullies her to convert. Catholic teaching, based on the importance of individual conscience and free will especially after Vatican II, firmly rejects such activities. Conversion is a process of attraction of individuals to what is resonant in them to a form of life; it is not about force. Additionally, that respect for the individual is in all facets of the schools. The Vatican’s Sacred Congregation on Catholic Education (1982) states:

If the teacher undertakes this contact [with students] with the conviction that students are already in possession of fundamentally positive values, the relationship will allow for an openness and a dialogue which will facilitate an understanding of the witness to faith that is revealed through the behavior of the teacher (*Lay Catholics in Schools*, para. 21).

Evangelizing witnesses to the faith, allows others to decide for themselves whether to come forward and embrace the message of those who witness. Jesus of Nazareth spoke to the people wherever they gathered to hear Him. Each individual was free to stay or go, believe or not, and be responsible to God alone for her decision. Echoing this

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<sup>37</sup> While it can be argued that even the exposure of students whose cultural capital is different from the mainstream is oppressive and hegemonic, I believe it does not supplant. Rather, it has an additive quality, so as to allow students to travel in wider circles of influence than their original life setting might have allowed. To paraphrase, it is to allow them to be judged by the “content of their character” not the nature of their cultural capital. Essentially, students should become bi-cultural and able to walk in or between cultures (privilege or not) as they choose. This issue is about student choice and not about socially imposed castes.

Catholic theological anthropology and Glasser's choice theory, the Catholic school teacher offers both faith and academic subjects in the context of human relationships and community. There is an affective and interpersonal dynamic with the instructional triangle of teacher, student, and subject material.

### *The Effectiveness of Catholic High Schools*

In 1960, Liberman challenged the delegates to the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) Convention to promote research on Catholic schools. Very little data had been collected about the size and number of Catholic schools and even less about their organization and outcomes. Seven years later, Greeley (1967) criticized this lack of Catholic school research as "unhistorical and anti-theoretical." He argued that Catholic school teachers and administrators were losing morale and an ability to respond to criticisms without a theoretical justification for the Catholic school system.

The first national study on Catholic education was *Catholic Schools in Action* by Neuwien (1966). It included statistics about enrollment, policies on admissions and tuition, and details about libraries, science offerings, and graduation requirements for approximately 9,451 elementary schools and 2,075 secondary schools. Significant from this work was the Inventory of Catholic School Outcomes (ICSO), which was primarily a measurement of religiosity and theological knowledge, views, and values. The most significant finding was concerned with parental interest and support of the students' education—that is, 91% of the

students reported very strong parental interest. Additionally, the study found that girls were more likely than boys to be religious.

Later in 1966, Greeley and Rossi published their pioneering study on the effectiveness of Catholic schools in the religious socialization of their students. In *The Education of Catholic Americans*, they reported that adult Catholics educated in Catholic schools had more orthodoxy and more orthopraxis than adult Catholics educated in public schools. Moreover, they gave evidence that graduates of Catholic schools were more tolerant of diversity and not divisive or separated from their neighbors. This study was found weak in its ability to establish relationship between variables, especially religious values. Covey (1992) asserted that because the study preceded the widespread use of regression analysis, it was not able to adequately estimate the cumulative effects of the subjects' predicted religious behavior and training. I will employ regression analysis in the hopes of establishing clearer predictability and accounting for the variability of academic achievement.

Ten years later, Greeley, McCready, and McCourt (1976) published a longitudinal study, entitled *Catholic Schools in a Declining Church*. They found that Catholic schools in a period of great social change (1966-1976 and issues of the Vietnam War, Civil Rights Movement, etc.) were as important for positive outcomes as the schools have been in the previous periods of social calm. The results were very similar to their earlier findings though more broad reaching. The schools were now considered a more important predictor of adult religiousness than parental religiousness. Parochial schools strongly influence the degree of hopefulness in the

Catholic school. Owing to their education in Catholic schools, the researchers asserted findings that these Catholics were more accepting of various race and ethnic groups and had less racial prejudice than their non-Catholic counterparts (see also Greeley, 1977 for similar findings).

The 1980s gave rise to a wealth of data collected under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Education's National Research of American Schools.

Accordingly, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) collected data from 1,016 high schools and 30,000 sophomores and 28,000 seniors to begin the longitudinal base for *High School and Beyond*. This data source would be repeatedly mined in the subsequent decades by a variety of researchers, so as to compare public and private schools. Over 7,000 of these students were from the Catholic schools.

In 1982, Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore did a major analysis of this data to identify the differences between public and private schools in *High School Achievement: Public, Catholic, and Private School Compared*. They reported three important findings: students in private schools learn more than those students in public schools; the private schools are safer, more disciplined, and have a more ordered environment than public schools; and public schools are more internally segregated than private schools. The private school teachers were more committed to insuring that students learned. More time was spent on instruction in the essential academic subjects. Every type of problematic behavior was less prevalent in private schools. Though the discipline was stricter, and though "student rights"

were not guaranteed by many legal safeguards<sup>38</sup> that apply to public schools, the private school students felt they were treated more fairly and had a greater sense of control over their own destinies. Students were absent less in Catholic school, and more homework was assigned, more was done, and less time was spent in watching television. Catholic school parents were more supportive. For the study at hand, one of the most distinguishing characteristics was that private schools were found to have a superior *social climate* (this notion will be extensively cited in Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982; and Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993).

The stream of Catholic school research continued especially with interest in the areas of religious practice. The work on the Catholic schools effect has generally been accepted (Covey, 1992), though debate on its size, importance, and applicability will be, I suspect, unending. International studies from England, Australia, and Canada have offered support for the effect also (e.g., Buckley, 2003; Gill, 2005; and Vella, 1999), but again, I believe that the issues are so polarized and political that debate will never end. Nevertheless, I will now turn to a treatment of the general achievement gap before examining the specifics of the achievement gap within Catholic Schools.

### *Possible Causes for the Difference Between Catholic and Public School Effects*

The perennial questions between Catholic and public school research are twofold. On a theoretical level, it accompanies the philosophical question of how

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<sup>38</sup> Generally, the legal rights in the public school are based on the broader civil laws, whereas Private and Catholic school students' rights are based on contractual laws as stipulated by the contract between the parents and the school usually found in the student handbook.

anyone can generalize based on even a good sampling of data. On a practical level, it deals with the questions, the difficulty of any generalization when the sampling is, by nature, different, which cannot be subjected to the procedures of randomization. The lively debate began in the early 1980s and has continued to the present. The main poles of the debate are “no effects of Catholic school attendance on achievement” versus “positive effects of Catholic school attendance.” Hoffer (2000) offers four distinct models as to the possible reasons as to how Catholic school effects are generated. These competing explanations, in turn, carry quite different practical implications, and we will turn to those after reviewing the main arguments.

1. *Individual Selection.* The “null” explanation is that sector differences simply reflect differences in the kinds of individual students attending public and Catholic schools.

According to this theory, achievement in Catholic schools is higher simply because Catholic school students are higher achievers to begin with or come from families that promote achievement more effectively. If public and Catholic school students with similar backgrounds and initial levels of achievement were compared, this theory predicts that no differences in final levels of achievement would be found.

2. *Aggregate Student Composition.* The aggregate-student composition hypothesis has been best articulated in the public-Catholic school debate by McPartland and McDill (1982). This hypothesis asserts that Catholic schools have higher levels of achievement as a direct consequence of having a more selective student body. The key idea here is that a student will learn more if he or she has higher-achieving peers.

This “contextual” effect, over and above the individual effects of background, has been developed in two different directions in the sociology literature. The first conceives context as essentially a social-psychological, normative factor that affects the orientations and efforts of students and school staff. Aggregation of students along socially salient lines of stratification lead to certain kinds of “collective representations” or shared self-images that in turn shape norms of behavior and individuals’ attitudes and actions. The indicators of composition most widely used are average student socioeconomic status and the proportions of students who are minorities (typically African American, but also Hispanic in some studies). McPartland and McDill (1982) emphasize this normative conception of school composition effects.

A second variant of the composition model can be derived from the sociological literature on ability grouping and tracking. Barr and Dreeben (1983) note that *classes* with initially higher average achievement tend to move at a more rapid pace than classes with lower average achievement. Students with the same level of initial achievement learn more in the faster classes than in the slower ones. While the composition of classes is the key variable in this conception, class composition is likely to be shaped in important ways by school-level student enrollment characteristics. As Barr and Dreeben (1983) argue, there is a whole “technology” of transforming school-level student “inputs” into instructional units of classrooms and groups within classes. By implication, we thus can note that the consequences of school inputs for instructional group composition are by no means automatic: Two schools with the same inputs can divide and allocate students to instructional contexts in very different ways, reflecting

differences in other resources (e.g., the number and qualifications of the school's teachers, and the number and size of classrooms), goals (e.g., all graduating students must be prepared to succeed in college, versus half of the graduates must be prepared for college), and the theories linking resources to goals.

The first, social-psychological variant of the aggregate-student composition model leads to the same conclusion as the individual selection model, that Catholic schools do not do anything better than public schools. The higher achievement in Catholic schools is instead a simple result of higher and perhaps more homogeneous student inputs. The second variant, in contrast, points to a range of specific actions that school administrators and teachers take to transform school-level student enrollments into classes and, within classes, instructional groupings. Accordingly, one should not control for class-level inputs when trying to determine the effects of schools or, more properly, school sectors. The appropriate variable on which to control for both variants is school composition, instead of class-level compositional variables. Again, however, as I took painstaking effort in Chapter 1, this critique can not be applied to all studies, to all Catholic schools, and especially to the school in the present study.

3. ***Competitive Market.*** The *market hypothesis* is given its most elaborate articulation in Chubb and Moe's *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools* (1989). The main argument they advance is that the competitive position of private schools (including Catholic and other private schools) essentially forces them to be more responsive and accountable to their constituencies, and that this leads to higher student achievement. Public schools are largely shielded from market forces, due to the barriers to parental choice that the state



has constructed. These barriers include the tax code, which forces parents with children in private schools to pay taxes to support public schools and to pay the private school tuition. It also includes the system of democratic control over the public school system, which leads to bureaucratic standardization and a lack of responsiveness to parental demands.

4. ***Institutional Charter.*** The *institutional charter argument* is developed most acutely in Bryk, Lee, and Holland's *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (1993). Their argument is that Catholic schools were originally developed, or "chartered," to teach a common academic curriculum to all students, and that this mission has been largely maintained up to the present. The academic tradition is rooted in and still invigorated to a significant degree by Catholic religious and social ideals. Although perhaps most pronounced in the schools of the Jesuit order, the ideas of literacy as a means of recovering the truths contained in sacred texts and commentaries, and the well-honed intellect as a tool to defend the faith, are still part of the Catholic school ideology. Another key element of Catholic ideology that affects schooling is the belief in the fundamental equality of all peoples under God. The linking of this idea of equality to an active faith in God gives the notion of equality more immediacy than the secular idea of equality rooted in the abstract idea of "citizen" that defines the public school ideal. Perhaps as a result, Catholic schools tend to expect all students to complete an academic curriculum, whereas public schools are only beginning to consider ways to bring more students into the academic program fold.

Although not developed by Bryk, Lee, and Holland, another dimension of the historical charter of Catholic schools, one discussed by Greeley in his 1982 book *Catholic High Schools and Minority Students*, also may continue to have an impact in the present day. This dimension is more of a reflection of American Catholics' struggle for social equality than of religious belief per se. Specifically, part of the motivation to maintain a common academic curriculum may be rooted in the upward-mobility orientation of the Catholic ethnic groups that many of the Catholic schools originally were built to serve. Discrimination from the Protestant establishment that controlled most local public school districts may well have had the effect of relegating the sons and daughters of Catholic immigrants to vocational or dead-end programs, had they stayed in the public system. Having their students outperform their public school counterparts may have been a goal of some Catholic educators and constituencies, for the prejudiced and unresponsive public schools would have limited the achievement and future life chances of Catholic youth. At present, this orientation would be concretely manifest in a competitive spirit among Catholic educators vis-à-vis their public education counterparts, and this competitive spirit would be independent of the market position of the Catholic schools.

5. ***Functional Community and Social Capital.*** The functional community hypothesis is articulated by Coleman and Hoffer in *Public and Private High Schools: The Impact of Communities* (1987). Coleman and Hoffer see Catholic school advantages as accruing in essentially accidental ways. Rather than emphasizing the force of institutionalized practice, however, they point instead to the immediate social structures in which the

schools are embedded. Particularly important, they argue, is the greater likelihood of Catholic school parents to know one another through church participation and thus to be able to exchange information and establish norms about the conduct of their children's schooling. The social ties that are built on the basis of participation in Church (or other institutions, such as work) constitute a "functional community," which contrasts with a "value community" that is defined by shared values rather than concrete relations with face-to-face contacts. The ties among individuals in the functional community can be viewed as "social capital" that parents can draw upon to help steer their children in productive directions.

Like the aggregate-student composition model, this theory points to explanatory mechanisms that do not entail any greater effort, talent, or quality of organization on the part of Catholic school educators. Their greater effectiveness is rather due to the more fortunate circumstances of Catholic school students, particularly the greater social capital available to them from their parents' social networks. But it is important to emphasize that this social capital is constructed by parents through participation in a community, and thus contrasts with the aggregated human capital or emergent class consciousness of the composition model, which does not necessarily entail any social relations among parents. It is thus the mutually reinforcing fit of school and community that Coleman and Hoffer emphasize.

### *Basics of the Achievement Gap*

Despite assertions of genetically-based academic achievement differences between the "cognitive abilities" of White Europeans and people of color in the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries (see Gould, 1996), it was not until the release of Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, and Weinfeld's pivotal 1966 *Equality of Educational Opportunity Study* (EEOS) that the existence of a minority-majority achievement gap found its way into the consciousness of the American public and the nation's policy makers. The 1964 Civil Rights Act (Title IV) called for a survey "concerning the lack of availability of equal educational opportunity by reason of race, color, religion, or national origin in public educational institutions at all levels" (quoted in Coleman et al., 1966, p. iii). The Coleman Report (Coleman et al., 1966), as it would later be termed, was conducted in response to that mandate. Coleman and his colleagues studied 600,000 children at 4,000 schools across the United States and found that academic achievement was less dependent on the general quality of a student's school, and more dependent on:

1. The school's racial and class composition;
2. The student's sense of control of his or her environment and future;
3. The verbal skills of these students' teachers; and
4. The student's family background.

The study and its findings suggested that the cause of this Black-White gap was a complex web of individual-, classroom-, and school-level variables. However, the Coleman Report's lasting legacy would be to further *Brown's* movement to radically alter

the racial composition of schools across the nation—that is, desegregation. The Coleman Report (1966) asserted the belief that the test scores of Black children would improve if the Black students attended schools where the majority of the students were white.

Since the Coleman Report, most studies documenting national trends in the Black-White test score gap have utilized test results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a congressionally mandated project of the U.S. Department of Education. Since 1969, the NAEP has been the only consistent and nationally representative assessment of American students at ages nine, thirteen, and seventeen in the subject areas of reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, and the arts (Allen, Carlson, and Zelenak, 1999). It is the results of the reading and math assessments that are generally highlighted when researching the gap. Looking at these two assessments, interesting trends emerge that point to both period and cohort effects from 1969 to 1990. During this time the gap seemed to be closing. With data after 1990, however, the gaps seemed to be widening again (Peterson, 2006). Hanushek and Raymond (2006) offers the following overview of the general achievement gap: “. . . there are three periods: a constant gap in the 1970s; a narrowing gap in the 1980s; and a reversal with constant or widening gap in the 1990s” (p. 145). These patterns, with slight differences, run through reading, mathematics, and science tests. The testing gaps ranged from three-quarters of a standard deviation to over-one-full standard deviation. A standard deviation of 1.0 below the mean would imply that the average Black student is performing at the level of a White student at the 16<sup>th</sup> percentile (Hanushek & Raymond, 2006, 145).

Although Hispanic students comprise a somewhat different<sup>39</sup> educational experience, they too show a parallel with African Americans when it comes to the achievement gap (Noguera, 2008; Sampson, 2004). Generally, the size of the Hispanic-White gap tends to be smaller than the Black-White gap. While not being identified as a separate group until 1973, Hispanics and their testing gap narrowed in the 1980s and reopened in the 1990s. In the late 1990s, however, the white-Hispanic gaps in reading, mathematics, and science were at or closer to the lowest levels ever (Harushek & Raymond, 2006, p. 146). In their analysis of the NAEP data, Phillips and Chin (2004) find the white-Hispanic gaps on an order of 0.70 SD in both math and reading at the 4<sup>th</sup> grade level (compared to 0.90 and 0.83 respective for Blacks and Whites in math and reading). At 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the corresponding Hispanic-White differences were nearly 0.90 and 0.80. The gap was increasing, but still smaller than that of the White-Black gap. Bali and Alvarez (2004) find Hispanic-White gap to be about half the size of the White-Black gap. While smaller, the gap has appeared, however, much more consistent over the decades. Lee's examination (2002) of the NAEP reports that the gap for Hispanics has not decreased since the 1980s. Issues of immigration with its accompanying language proficiency issues, among many other reasons, may well explain this lack of change. Harushek and Raymond (2006), however, write that the Hispanic gap is divergent "from that of Black Americans and that we are observing something more complex than just a 'minority' problem" (p. 146).

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<sup>39</sup> While not covered precisely in the de jure issues and policy of *Plessey, Brown*, etc., Hispanics, especially in the Southwest, have their own issues of racial and group segregation (see San Miguel, 2001 for a historical account; Barrera, 1997 for a theoretical treatment of Hispanic educational differences; or Noguera & Wing, 2006 for a more recent general treatment).

Phillips and Chin (2004, pp. 468-470) summarized the findings of NAEP. They see that the research showed that the Black-White gap at the 4<sup>th</sup> grade narrowed during the 1970s and into the 1980s, after which it stagnated and grew again slightly. As of 2000, this gap was 0.90 of a SD in math and 0.83 in reading. The corresponding gap between the groups for 8<sup>th</sup> graders was 1.06 and 0.85 standard deviations in math and reading, respectively.

The finding of the 40 years of the NAEP data that is even more alarming is that the gap often widens as minority students progress through school (Peng, Wright, & Hill, 1995; Phillips, 1998). These researchers have found that as minority students get older, test scores, positive attitudes, and persistence toward achievement appears to wane (Steinberg, Brown, & Dornbusch, 1996). In a pair of studies using the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS), Fryer and Leviitt (2004, 2005) found a gap of 0.66 in math and 0.40 in reading for minorities at the beginning of kindergarten. Over successive grades, however, these gaps grew. Though not based on explicit testing results, these findings are consistent with the generally increasingly negative scores from my research (Hollis, 2006) when examining increasing years of high school.

Another way to measure the achievement gap is to compare the highest level of educational attainment for various groups. Here, too, there are gaps at all levels (Perie & Moran, 2005; U.S. Census Department, 2006). Hispanic and African-American high school students are more likely to drop out of high school in every state. Of these high school graduates, college matriculation rates for African-American and Hispanic high-school students remain well below those of White high-school graduates – although they

have risen in recent years. Furthermore, of those students enrolling in college, Hispanic and Black young adults are only half as likely to earn a college degree as White students.

To summarize the current stand of the research and the findings of the NAEP data, the Education Trust concluded:

By the time (minority students) reach grade 12, if they do so at all, minority students are about four years behind other young people. Thus, the 17-year-old African American and Latino students have skills in English, mathematics and science similar to those of 13-year-old White students (Perie & Moran, 2005).

Such a disproportionate and glaring difference between groups of its young people based on race and ethnic background cannot be tolerated in a country that purports to possess values and ideals of equality.

### *Achievement of Minorities in Catholic Schools*

The first research to deal extensively with the role of minorities in Catholic schools was performed by Cibulka, O'Brien, and Zewe (1982) in *Inner City Private Elementary Schools: A Study*. The researchers selected 64 private schools (90% of these were under Catholic auspices) in eight large cities. The families were identified as low-income and minority. The students were 56% Black, 31% Hispanic, 33% Protestants, and all were paying some<sup>40</sup> tuition. The report claimed academic successes in the school, especially because it did not enroll the cream of the crop of students. Rather, it

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<sup>40</sup> At first this notion of some tuition might strike the reader odd, but there are many students, including those in this study's school who pay little-to-no tuition. Again, this needs to be viewed in terms of social justice and not in terms of a for-profit business. Hoxby (1994) discusses the advantages of high Catholic density population, especially in large cities, where the Church authorities offer greater subsidy so as to offset some of the cost of tuition (see also Deal, 1997).



emphasized socialization through the creation of an educational environment. The study gave high marks for student behavior as judged by daily attendance, cooperation with the teachers, respect for one another, and positive feedback from parents. It did not deal with the achievement gap between racial and ethnic groups.

In 1982, Greeley (1982/2002) used the data from *High School and Beyond*, entitled *Catholic High Schools and Minority Students*. He reported that these minority students were twice as likely (44-to-22%) as those in public schools to report more than five hours of homework a week and nearly 30% more students were likely to say that they were confident they would graduate from college. Catholic school minority students in standardized tests were 0.50 SD above public school minority students. The success of the Catholic schools, with minority students was not among those who came from affluent and well educated Black and Hispanic families but among precisely the opposite, that is, from the less affluent and non-college educated families. Grant (1988) describes that transition of Academic Catholic education, in its reality and popular perception, as follows:

Catholic schools were often seen as serving another kind of class interest: a narrow and sectarian set of beliefs taught in a rigidly authoritarian atmosphere that was inimical to democratic beliefs. When large-scale racial desegregation programs were begun in the 1960s, it was charged that private schools, especially the Roman Catholic parochial schools, further offended democratic aims by providing a refuge for those who wanted to avoid attending school with blacks. Thus the broad stereotypes served to reinforce

public education as the school of the democratic social order, whereas private education meant basically either schools for snobbery or bastions of Catholicism indoctrinating immigrants with the formulas of the Baltimore catechism. The real moral vision was held to be espoused by the common-school reformers. The public school opened its doors to all comers and classes, whereas the private school preserved the divisions of class, race, and religion. Today these stereotypes have given way if they have not been smashed altogether. The public school seems to have lost its sense of moral crusade as it grew and bureaucratized and became more officially value neutral. . . . The most impressive shift has occurred in the Roman Catholic schools, which were the most heavily concentrated in urban areas and which accounted for two-thirds of all students enrolled in nonpublic schools. While some parochial schools closed as upwardly mobile Catholics moved to the suburbs, many parish schools remained open and served the urban poor, including non-Catholic blacks as well as new Hispanic immigrants (p. 168-169).

The claim that Catholic schools were doing a better job for minority young people for about half the per-pupil cost has caused Grant (1988) to claim that "Catholic schools most nearly fit the idea of the American common school," where students' vocation and life aspirations are "less class based" (p. 169)

### *Issues of Selection Bias*

Perhaps the best and most far-reaching research in Catholic education has been done by Neal (1997, 1998, & 2000), an economist from the University of Chicago. Neal (1997) makes great strides in dealing with selection bias when discussing the Catholic school effect and with the minority school effect in the inner city. He rightly criticizes previous studies, especially Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore (1982) for lumping all Catholic schools and their test results together, which perhaps unwittingly minimizes the effect of poor test results.<sup>41</sup> Inner city schools obtain poor test results by virtue of their minority and/or economically poor population and their related lower levels of cultural capital, parental education, and possible limited educational background. These results were summed with the results from larger and more affluent suburban Catholic schools, whose population would seem to be opposite due to their suburban location, wealth, and enrollment selectivity due to having a college preparatory curriculum. After Neal sorted through the *National Longitudinal Survey of Youth*, his data were more comparable and informative, especially regarding the urban schools. He found that Catholic schooling in urban areas increased the probability of high school graduation and college attendance,

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<sup>41</sup> While this can appear to be a form of equivocation, it is not rare when measurements are publicly available and apt to be misunderstood. In the mid-1990s when the Ohio Proficiency Tests were first implemented in the Catholic schools of Ohio, the Cleveland Catholic newspaper published the state test results by school. Reporting school findings without regard to levels of poverty, populations with disabilities, heterogeneous elementary school backgrounds, etc., was a great concern. Little did many readers of the newspaper know about the students' baseline when they entered the school or what obstacles the students had overcome. For tuition-based schools, it was a public relations and commercial nightmare. Approximately one year afterwards, the paper began to report the scores as a diocesan system in comparison with the other regional systems in Northeast Ohio. Of course, the variability of the results from the urban Catholic schools was greatly affected by averaging their results with those from the suburban and college preparatory Catholic schools.

which increased the prospects of future earnings. Moreover, he argued that the gains of Catholic school attendance are more significant for minorities than for nonminorities and that the school effect for urban Catholic schools is significantly greater than they are for nonurban Catholic schools. These findings were replicated in further studies (Neal, 1998; Grogger & Neal, 2000; Hoffer, 2000). Hoffer (2000) adds that the, "Catholic school effects are greater for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially with respect to family structure and functioning" (p. 108).

Therefore, notwithstanding the ongoing debate over the Catholic school effect, it appears most significant among minority students in America's central cities—that is, those who are most apt to have to bridge the so-called achievement gap. Accordingly, Catholic schools seem to be succeeding by eliminating social-class limitations on educational achievement, and they do better at promoting equality and justice than does the common school (see Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993). Riordan (2000) notes, "[q]uite remarkably the percentage of non-White students in Catholic secondary schools has increased dramatically over the past 20 years to the point where the racial demography of Catholic and public schools are now virtually the same" (p. 39). In this new *Catholic common school* in the inner city, Catholic schools are providing equality of educational opportunity and are serving the democratic goals of the United States. While there is still a cost basis to this, the generosity of many, many people who care about the plight of urban education and the newer

financial initiatives for faith-based<sup>42</sup> institutions may make this religious common school available.

### *The Impact of Community: The Possible Catholic School Effect*

Coleman and Hoffer (1987) performed an in-depth study entitled *Public and Private High Schools: The Impact of Communities*. Based on *High School and Beyond* data and two longitudinal studies, they sought to explore the reasons for the Catholic school effect, especially for the higher achievement of Catholic school students between their sophomore and senior years. Was there a true school effect? They found similar findings to those above. The achievement benefits of Catholic schools were especially strong for students who were Black or Hispanic and/or who were from low-wealth families or households. They found, however, increased verbal and mathematical skills, but not in science. Additionally, they found the Catholic school academic benefits were least strong for those who were from advantaged family backgrounds. They hypothesized that Catholic schools have a considerable less depressive effect on the academic achievement of students who come from single-family homes with low social capital and achievement goals than does the effect of the public schools (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987, p. 118). While the lore of Catholic school discipline is legend, Coleman and Hoffer (1987, p. 138) found Catholic school dropout rates strikingly lower than the rate from public schools: public school (14.4%), other private schools (11.9%), and

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<sup>42</sup> I find this term very interesting as it applies to schooling. I believe that it goes far beyond simple religious or secular doctrine or philosophy. It could well be argued that all schools, all institutions, all groups of people, or social realities, come together with some *raison d'être* that is theoretical, be it religious or secular. School faith should be a faith in the student and their success. Therefore, I would think that we could assert at all schools should be faith-in-students institutions, which has much more power than something like child-centeredness.

Catholic schools (3.4%). Expulsion rates were similar.

Coleman and Hoffer (1987) hypothesized an explanation for the higher achievement in Catholic schools, fewer disciplinary problems, and higher aspirations of Catholic school students: the *functional community* surrounding the Catholic school. They understood a functional community as a source that gave the institutional members both unity and support. Norms were agreed upon and passed on to the new members that provided structural consistency. They defined it as "a community in which social norms and sanctions, including those that cross generations, arise out of the social structure itself, and both reinforce and perpetuate that structure" (p. 7). The functional community is relational in scope. Values and meaning are found in interactions within the community (p. 8). This community gives more to those who have less—that is, especially those students who have little, or no cultural and social capital (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987, p. 221). Field (2004) offers a pithy definition of social capital: "relationships matter" (p. 1). These relationships produce trust and advance personal and interpersonal health and achievement. Accordingly, the Catholic school offers its students a "group within which there is extensive trustworthiness and extensive trust is able to accomplish much more than a comparable group without that trustworthiness and trust" (Coleman & Hoffer, 1986, p. 221). The people in Catholic schools offer social capital to their students. The educational staff designs norms and sanctions to strengthen the community. In turn, the community strengthens the individuals with new relationships. The success of the Catholic schools is linked to the existence of its functional communities. Catholic schools are communities of learning

and believing.

Bryk, Lee, and Holland's *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (1993) stands now as a bridge from the beginning of the *High School and Beyond* data-based research to the studies that indicate the affective, communal, and relational importance of the Catholic school. Bryk and his colleagues (1993) planned "to examine the distinctive features of Catholic schools and the ways in which these features combined to form supportive social environments that promote academic achievement from a broad cross section of students" (p. ix). They wanted to subject the idea of a sense of community "to rigorous specification and empirical scrutiny" (p. xii). They asked the question: What was it about Catholic schools that fostered engagement in students and commitment in teachers? They identified the social behaviors and the key structural features of a communal school organization as:

1. A set of shared values among the members of the school community (administrators, teachers, students, and parents);
2. A sense of shared activities, both academic and non-academic in nature;
3. A distinctive set of social relations among school members fostered by two key organizational features: a diversity of teacher roles and a dynamic of teacher interactions that promote collegiality (p. 277).

They analyzed various data sources concerning communal school organization by means of 23 indicators that measured shared values, shared activities and social relations and made seven ethnographic visitations. They hypothesized the existence of a phenomenon of a "person-in community" (p. 321), which was a significant goal of

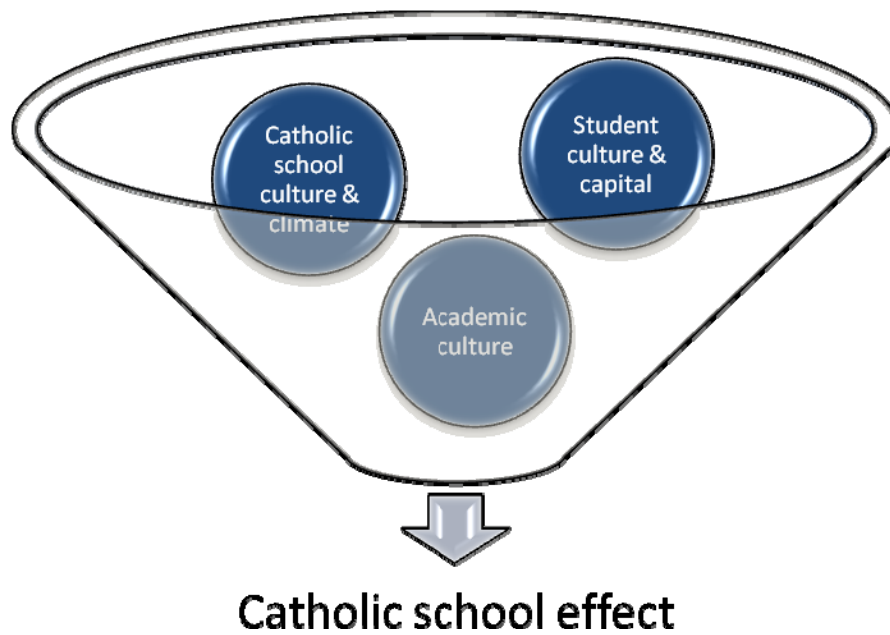
Catholic education theory. For them, schooling involves more than conveying the acquired knowledge of civilization to students and developing in them the intellectual skills they need to create new knowledge. Education also entailed forming the basic disposition for citizenship in a democratic and pluralistic society. Fostering such a commitment makes serious demands on schools. If they are to teach children how they should live in common, they must themselves be communities. They concluded that effective Catholic high schools function on the basis of four foundational characteristics (pp. 297-304):

- 1) a delimited technical core,
- 2) communal organization,
- 3) decentralized governance, and
- 4) an inspirational ideology.

These four characteristics summarized the findings of the whole study. In summation (see Figure 12), there appears to be three overall dynamics at work in the Catholic schools system—or at least, some of these schools—that I summarize as the Catholic school culture and climate, the students’ culture and capital, and the overall academic culture. How these three areas ebb and flow within a Catholic school and the differences between Catholic school and others is extremely difficult to ascertain. Yet, that is in part the goal of these studies, where I believe the unique culture of the school is the primary determiner of the effect.



Figure 12. Possible Elements Leading to the Catholic School Effect.



For my purposes, the communal organization and the inspirational ideology are important in the formation of the institutional culture and, in turn, the school's climate. Akin to the research and the mitigated achievement gap in military/Pentagon schools, Morgan and Sørensen, (1999) asserted that military and Catholic schools have an "other-worldly" institution makeup from which to inculcate students with norms that help to coordinate the efforts of schools, teachers, and parents in instilling pro-achievement attitudes and behaviors in students. I assert that they have a unique organizational culture and climate that flows from that culture.

### *Relationship Between School climate and School Effectiveness*

There is a substantial body of research indicating that the effectiveness of schools, in terms of student learning and development, is significantly influenced by the quality and characteristics of the school climate. Owens (1981) argues.

Not surprisingly, the research suggests that schools that emphasize supportive, open communications, collaboration, intellectuality, and that reward achievement and success outperform (in terms of achievement, attendance, drop-out rate, frustration, alienation) those that emphasize constraint, restrictiveness, rigidity, coldness, lack of excitement and reward conformity (p. 266).

In a classic study, Brookover, Schweitzer, Schneider, Beady, Flood, and Wisenbaker (1978) found that school climate (defined primarily as academic norms and expectations of the school) contributed to the prediction of mean school achievement over and above achievement predicted by socioeconomic status and racial composition. When school climate was entered prior to SES and racial composition in multiple regression analysis, more than 72% of the variance in average school achievement was explained in a statewide random sample of 68 schools. Schools with high proportions of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and high levels of academic achievement were characterized as having strong positive climates that fostered student self-efficacy, learning, and achievement. Brookover et al. (1978) concluded that "school composition does not necessarily determine school climate and therefore changes in school composition (changes in SES or race) in the absence of changes in climate do not guarantee changes in school level achievement" (p. 316). I

argue that the basis for climate is culture.

In their measurement of dimensions of organizational health in middle schools and academic achievement, Hoy and Hannum (1997) found school climate (as indicated by a general health index) was positively associated with student achievement in math ( $r = .61, p < .01$ ), reading ( $r = .58, p < .01$ ), and writing ( $r = .55, p < .01$ ). Additionally, boys attending middle schools who have a more positive perception of school climate tend to have fewer externalizing behaviors (e.g., aggression, delinquent behavior). Similarly, Kuperminc, Leadbeater, Emmons, and Blatt (1997) found that positive perceptions of school climate were related to lower levels of externalizing problems ( $r = -.47, p < .05$ ).

Characteristics associated with dropout include weak adult authority, a climate of low expectations, large school size, and an absence of caring adult relationships (Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). In schools with positive school climate, suspension rates are lower, attendance rates are higher, and students and parents have higher levels of satisfaction (Griffith, 1999, 2004; Haynes, Ben-Avie, & Ensign, 2003; Haynes, Emmons, Ben-Avie, 1997).

Do various school climates produce different student outcomes? Studies have identified the human organizational attributes that differentiate the more effective from the less effective schools. Wheatley (1999) views climate as a “field,” containing forces that are invisible but immediately perceptible by anyone entering the environment. They are “unseen but real forces that influence people’s behavior” (Wheatley, 1999, p. 15). Definitions point to multiple dimensions including a sense of order and discipline,

parental involvement, staff dedication to student learning, high expectations for academic performance and behavior, caring relationships, and respectful interactions between students, staff, parents, and community members. Today, models of school climate underscore the varied dimensions and organize the complexity of the construct. School climate is associated with a variety of student outcomes including achievement, absenteeism, self-concept, and behavior. When high expectations are in place, order and discipline are clear, rules are consistent and fair, caring and sensitivity characterize relationships between staff and students, and reciprocal exchanges of communication with parents occur, the probability that student achievement will improve and disruptive behavior will decline increases.

In summary, I have attempted to weave together the elements of Catholic school mission and philosophy, the basics of the academic achievement gap, and the importance of the affective and organizational culture of a school. It is again my contention that that organizational culture of Catholic schools produces a school community and climate that offers the students, especially those who are most in need, a bridge of cultural capital and social capital so as to offer academic press and motivation for learning. This being said, I will now turn to the methodological means of ascertaining school climate and academic achievement, their correlates and predictors.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the notion that a unique school climate may exist within a Catholic urban high school and that that climate might mitigate differences in academic achievement between ethnic-and-racial-student groups. This chapter presents the design of the study, including the research questions, an explanation of the research instrument, and a brief discussion of how the validity and reliability is addressed building on Chapter 1. Additionally, this chapter discusses the procedures used for the quantitative data collection, a description of the data analysis, and the qualitative procedures of the confirmatory focus groups.

#### *Research Questions*

The following overarching research questions will guide the investigation into this comprehensive curriculum, urban multiethnic and multiracial Catholic high school:

1. What are the dimensions of school climate within this school?
2. What are the demographic and climate factors that correlate with school academic achievement?

3. Does the length of Catholic school experience, school climate measurements, race, wealth, or other demographics impact or predict academic achievement?
4. What input or insights do recent graduates from this school have about this research's data?

### *Research Design*

This study used mixed-method components to give fuller insights to the levels and possible reasons for school climate: a questionnaire and confirmatory focus groups. Yin (2003) states that the research design is a “logical plan for getting from here to there” — where here may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and there is some set of conclusions or answers about the original questions (p. 20). Accordingly, I have elected to use a questionnaire/survey based on previous work and a confirmatory focus group.

The questionnaire survey design was selected because of its strength in addressing “descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory purposes” (Babbie, p. 238). A key feature of surveys is standardized questions. Although social scientists recognize that respondents’ interpretations of questions are not standardized, many feel that question standardization is a minimum criterion for using data to obtain information and informant’s perceptions. Comparability of the questions is the key. The discovery of new research questions or new approaches to measurement is limited, and to the extent that it does occur, revised measurement must await the next survey. Accordingly, the questionnaire will continue the work beginning with Hollis (1994) and later Hollis

(2005). Repeated use and analysis will allow for greater standardization and reliability, consensus of understanding by the readers, and, hopefully, greater validity in addressing student perceptions of school climate. While the previous work was not specifically a pilot study, it is hoped that the previous use and refinement of the instrument will allow for greater validity of the instrument.<sup>43</sup>

Focus groups shift the emphasis away from the individual and use the dynamic of the collective discussion to gain research insights and augment our understanding of a topic. Whereas the individual semistructured or in-depth interview is primarily concerned with individual behavior, the focus group is more interested in data process, where the issues are explored in the context of group discussion (Power, 2002; Vaughn, Shay, & Sinagub, 1996). Accordingly, the results of information obtained from a questionnaire and followed-up by confirmatory focus groups allows a researcher's inferences and conclusions to have a deeper understanding, richer description, and tested alternative explanations.

### *Sample and Procedure*

On May 23, 2007, the entire student body of Cleveland Central Catholic High School completed the School Improvement Plan's School Climate and Student Opinion Questionnaire in 24 homerooms.<sup>44</sup> This questionnaire was part of the school's ongoing

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<sup>43</sup> This work, however, might be construed as a pilot study, since Yin (2003) broadly defines a pilot study as that work that enables the researcher to refine the overall approach to data collection as well as relevant lines of questions to be addressed in a study.

<sup>44</sup> While the term homeroom is used, homeroom consists of a segment of the student's regular third period class, e.g., Spanish class, chemistry class, or study hall. Hence, homerooms offered the reasonably controlled environment for administration of this questionnaire.

accreditation renewal, school improvement plan, and school evaluation process.<sup>45</sup> All students received a confidential (coded identity) questionnaire so that school academic indicators and demographic items could later be matched with school climate perceptions. Students were informed that I would be the only person to match the confidential code with student names and that I would not do that until after the school year was completed. My goal in coding was to match students' GPA, standardized test scores, and school demographics with their self-reported items. Homeroom teachers administered the questionnaires as they had done in previous years. They also assisted students by answering questions or by reading<sup>46</sup> the items for special education students (e.g., for students with cognitive disabilities). Due to the length of the questionnaire, teachers were asked to accommodate the students with sufficient completion time. According to teacher reports, all students had enough time to complete the questionnaire.

Based on the number of students in attendance on May 23, 417 students completed the questionnaire, which consisted of 116 ninth graders (27.8%), 120 tenth graders (28.8%), 85 eleventh graders (20.5%), and 96 twelfth graders (23%). The ethnoracial makeup of the students was as follows: 258 African American/Black students; 55 Hispanic students; 101 White students; and 3 Asian students.

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<sup>45</sup> In addition to the school's accreditation evaluation process, I informed the students that I would also use the information in my graduate work at Cleveland State University.

<sup>46</sup> Some researchers question the validity of student responses of some questionnaires because of the student's maturity level, developmental level, and reading ability (Bandura, 1997).



### *Instrumentation*

The School Climate and Study Opinion Questionnaire Instrument (see Appendix G) for the present study was based on a 2004 questionnaire (see Appendix A) and subsequent research findings (Hollis, 2006). It was made up of items related to school climate and demographics that have correlated with academic achievement according to the literature. The previous instrument's validity measurements for school climate were examined via an exploratory factor analysis. Principal factors extraction with Varimax with Kaiser Normalization was performed through SPSS on 88 items, which revealed 11-grouped factors with good Cronbach's alphas (see Appendix C for a list of factors by Cronbach's alphas). These factors became the model (see Appendix D) for a composite of school climate and were named: teacher attributes, religious components, school fondness, respect, safety and physical plant, technology and extended thinking, quality of program, progressive instruction, real world and self-efficacy, extracurricular values, and treatment equity across racial/ethnic groups by the faculty and staff (see Appendix C for the items divided by factors).

The whole of the questionnaire and its directions were piloted by a group of 12 high school juniors and seniors. Based on a consensus of this group, the instrument was changed from a five-to-a-six-point Likert scale. The original 2004 demographic items were expanded to include variables targeting the length of Catholic education and other correlates of academic achievement.

The questionnaires were coded so that students could confidentially be matched with the demographic and academic data from the school records that correlates with

academic achievement. The process offered a large bank of variables to examine the possible dynamics operational within this Catholic school. Again, the variable categories are: academic indicator variables, demographic variables, general school variables, and Catholic school variables. Below is the listing of this study's beginning variables followed by narrative descriptions (see also Appendix H):

#### Academic Achievement Variables

- GPA
- Math OGT
- Reading OGT
- Science OGT
- Social Studies OGT
- Writing OGT

#### Demographics Variables

- Faith tradition
- Family income
- Father's post-high school education
- Gender
- Minority/Majority status
- Mother's post-high school education
- Specific race/ethnicity
- Traditional 2-parent family makeup

#### General School Variables

- Absences from school
- Discipline points
- General school climate factor(s)
- Graduation-minded friends
- Participation in school clubs

- Participation in school sports

#### Catholic School Variables

- Family who attended Catholic schools
- Frequency of religious service attendance
- Percentage of Catholic schooling
- Specifically Catholic school climate factor(s)

### *Narrative Descriptions of Variables/Measures*

#### *Academic Achievement Variables*

The following are the descriptions of the general academic achievement variables:

- **GPA.** The variable of GPA is the cumulative Grade Point Average as reported for the student's concluding semester of the 2006-2007-school year.
- **OGT Tests:** The Ohio Graduation Test, which replaced the former Ohio Ninth-Grade Proficiency Tests, is aligned to Ohio's academic content standards. These standards were adopted by the State Board of Education in the areas of English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The graduating class of 2007 was the first class responsible for taking and passing all five tests as a graduation requirement. Accordingly, all students were administered these as part of state requirements when they were tenth graders. That first administration in March of the students' second semester of their tenth grade is the basis for the test's standardized scores. A standardized score of 400 is required for each subtest for a student to attain basic proficiency and a passing grade, which allows the student to be eligible for a standard high school diploma in the State of Ohio.

- a) **OGT Test Reading.** The reading component consists of 32-multiple choice, four-short answers, and two-extended-response test questions measuring four content standards: acquisition of vocabulary; concepts of print, comprehension strategies, and self-monitoring strategies; information, technical, and persuasive text; and literary text.
- b) **OGT Test: Writing.** The writing component consists of 10-multiple choice test questions, one-short-answer question, and two-writing prompts measuring the three Ohio standards: writing process, writing applications, and writing conventions.
- c) **OGT Test: Science.** The science component consists of 32-multiple choice questions, four-short answers, and two-extended-response test questions from the six Ohio content standards: earth and space science; life sciences; physical sciences; science and technology; scientific inquiry; and scientific ways of knowing.
- d) **OGT Test: Mathematics.** The mathematics component consists of 32-multiple choice questions, five-short answers questions and one-extended response test question that measures six Ohio standards: number, number sense and operations; measurement; geometry and spatial sense; patterns, functions and algebra; data analysis and probability; and mathematical processes.
- e) **OGT Test: Social Studies.** The social studies component consists of 32-multiple choice, four-short answers, and two-extended response test

questions from the seven content areas of the state curriculum: history; people in societies; geography; economics; government; citizenship rights and responsibilities; and social studies skills and methods.

### ***Demographic Variables***

The following are the descriptions of the general demographic variables:

- ***Race/ethnicity and Minority Status.*** According to school records and self-reports, students belonged to one of three ethnoracial groups: White (=1), Black (=2), and Hispanic (=3) students. Asian students' results were only used for analyzing the questionnaire. A second ethnoracial variable was determined differentiating the students into minority status (Black and Hispanic students). This variable was dummy coded White (=1) or Minority (=0).
- ***Gender.*** Males and females were dummy coded male (=1) or female (=0).
- ***Faith Tradition.*** The responses of students identifying themselves as Catholic and those of a faith tradition other than Catholic were dummy coded: Catholic (=1) and otherwise (=0).
- ***Frequency of Religious Service Attendance.*** Students reported their amount of religious participation based on the following Likert Scale: once or more per week (not including school); 2 or 3 times per month (not including school); 3 to 5 times per half year (not including school); about 2 times per year (not including school); or only while at school.
- ***Family income.*** All student families complete a financial summary statement from the Private School Aid Service (P.S.A.S.) that is used to determine financial

need and eligibility for a variety of scholarships, financial gifts, and study work programs offered by the diocese, support organizations, and friends of the school. The gross family incomes figures have been taken from copies of the family's 1040 IRS Schedule for the 2006 tax year.

- ***Traditional Two-Parent Family Household.*** Students reported their parental home-life composition as living “traditionally” with both mother and father or as having home composition other than with both mother and father (e.g., grandparent(s), one parent, other family member). The variables were dummy coded 2-parent households (=1) or otherwise (=0).
- ***Mother's Post-High School Education.*** Students reported their mother's education level as either having post-high school study/training or having high school or less educational/training. The variables were dummy coded mother with post-secondary education (=1) or otherwise (=0).
- ***Father's Post-High School Education.*** Students reported their father's education level as either having post-high school study/training or having high school or less educational/training. The variables were dummy coded father with post-secondary education (=1) or otherwise (=0).

### ***General School Variables***

The following are the descriptions of the general school variables:

- ***Absences from School.*** The total number of times absent for each student was matched with the student questionnaire and was added as an attendance

variable. For consistency, tardiness was not included unless it was more than one-half day, which according to the school policy constituted a full absence.

- ***Discipline Points.*** As described above, Cleveland Central Catholic, like most schools, keeps a running record of behavior/rule infractions. Infractions are weighted depending on their seriousness. The total number of infraction points for each student was added to each student's profile in a discipline variable.
- ***Participation in school sports.*** Students reported whether they were participating in school sports activities or not.
- ***Participation in school clubs.*** Students reported whether they were participating in school club activities or not.
- ***General School Climate Factors.*** Based on the previous use of the school climate factors, there should be some indicators of school climate that are generalizable to the climate of public school or non-Catholic schools (e.g., teachers care; I like my school; I feel safe). Those factor variables will be determined based on factor analysis and subsequent analysis.

### ***Catholic School Variables***

The following are the descriptions of the general Catholic school variables:

- ***Percent of Catholic Education.*** This measurement is an attempt to provide a variable that has been absent from other studies. When comparing different schools, especially public, etc., with Catholic schools, there are too many extraneous variables. In all studies that I have read, the students' present school

is generalized to the whole of the student's education. The use of percentage of Catholic education within a Catholic school seeks to gain greater control of the situation, since the factors related to school selections, environment, etc., are the same. This should isolate a possible degree of Catholic school effect within students in this Catholic school. Accordingly, I constructed a variable quantifying the number of years a student had been educated in Catholic institutions:

$$\% = \text{Catholic school years} \div \text{totals school years}.$$

The total years of Catholic school was then divided by their current year of schooling to determine a variable of percent of Catholic education. This variable for each student was added to her overall profile.

- ***Family Members who attended Catholic schools.*** Students reported the general number of their family who attend, or have attended Catholic schools based on the following Likert scale: all, most, about half, few, or none.
- ***Friends who attended Catholic schools.*** Students reported the general number of their friends who presently attend Catholic schools based on the following Likert scale: all, most, about half, few, or none.
- ***Specifically Catholic School Climate Factor(s).*** Similar to the general school climate of any school, there are factors that are specific to the climate of a Catholic school. These areas or factors, again, have been borne out in this instruction's previous work (Hollis, 2006): the students' opinions of the faith life of the school, the school's religious values, and the importance of retreats and/or



liturgies. These are environmental elements of an educational institution that would appear different from a nonreligious or non-Catholic school, which might have impact on the educational product. These religious/faith-based items are included, but any factor variables will be determined only after confirmatory factor analysis.

### *Data Analysis*

An exploratory factor analysis was performed to measure the amount of internal validity in the student-opinion segment of the questionnaire. This factor analysis extracted the related components of school climate, which formed the school climate variables. Subsequently, I examined the correlations between these school climate components (factors), the students' reported demographics, and academic-achievement measurements. Additionally, an ANOVA compared the means between school climate categories, demographics, and academic achievement based on minority and majority membership, followed by applicable post hoc test(s).

Lastly, multiple stepwise linear regression models were developed using the academic achievement measurements as dependent measures and demographic, general school, Catholic school, and school climate factored variables as independent measurements. The regression analysis with stepwise entry determined the best model for each of the three dependent variables of academic achievement. The statistical analysis as a result of SPSS computation focused on identifying the best model and predictor set of variables for each dependent variable using  $R^2$  as a criteria. Comparing

the Betas permitted the determination of how much each independent variable could predict academic performance in classes at Cleveland Central Catholic and on two important portions of the Ohio Graduation Tests.

### *Focus Group Post-Analysis Follow-up*

The findings of this study were presented in the form of a topic guide and questions route (Krueger, 1998) to a series of three focus groups of recent graduates from the school. This procedure explored how the statistical results resonated with these former students and how the findings could be augmented by the explanations, understanding, and insights of individuals who had lived the experience being examined. The focus-group discussions were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were examined for general themes and applied to the statistical findings. Accordingly, the study's end process was to offer multileveled findings and directions for future research in the area of the educational gap in both Catholic and non-Catholic schools.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The main purpose of this study was to examine academic achievement indicators and any relationships to length-of-Catholic-school experience, Catholic and general school factors, and a broad spectrum of demographic variables. A multicultural student population in a coeducational Catholic high school in the inner-city of Cleveland, Ohio participated in this study. SPSS 16.0 was the statistical program used to analyze the descriptive and inferential statistics presented in this chapter. Additionally, a thematic analysis of verbatim transcriptions was used to analyze the various non-numerical discourses from a series of confirmatory focus groups of recent alumni.

A total of 417 high school students responded to a questionnaire comprising demographic items and school climate indicators. This questionnaire was confidentially coded so that its data could be matched subsequently with further academic and demographic information from the school's records. These student respondents constituted all the students attending the school on that morning—that is, it was 95% of the 440-student body. The demographic and school climate data from the

questionnaires were matched with the school's academic and demographic information.

A total of four general groups of variables with subcategories were composed:

#### Demographics Variables

- Faith tradition
- Family income
- Father's post-high school education
- Gender
- High school graduate family members
- High-school-graduation-minded friends
- Minority/Majority status
- Mother's post-high school education
- Specific race/ethnicity
- Traditional two-parent family makeup

#### Academic Achievement Variables

- GPA
- Math OGT
- Reading OGT
- Science OGT
- Social Studies OGT
- Writing OGT

#### General School Variables

- Absences from school
- Discipline points
- General school climate factor(s)
- Participation in school clubs
- Participation in school sports

#### Catholic School Variables

- Frequency of religious service attendance
- Percentage of Catholic school education
- Specific Catholic-school climate factor(s)

Subsequent to the quantitative analysis, general findings were explored with a series of three focus groups over the course of an alumni weekend at the high school. A total of 12 alumni participated and comprised students from the two most recent graduating classes. All students had participated in this study before their graduation.

#### *Demographic Characteristics*

On the morning of May 23, 2007 during the schoolwide homeroom period, all students in attendance completed a confidentially coded questionnaire (see Appendix G) as part of the school's ongoing accreditation process for the North Central Accreditation and the Ohio Catholic School Accrediting Associations (see Appendix H for institutional permission to use the coded dataset). These data sets were matched with the school's academic and financial records. Subsequent to approval from the Institutional Review Board of Cleveland State University (see Appendix I), these anonymized composite data were made available to use for this present study.

The 417-student participants included all four years of high school and three main ethnoracial groups: White, Black, and Hispanic students. Ethnoracial student groups were as follows: 258 Black, 101 White, and 55 Hispanic students. Three students

identified themselves as Asian.<sup>47</sup> Due to historically perceived sampling selection bias in Catholic school research, I performed additional analyses comparing student groups. Accordingly, I sought to demonstrate that there were no significant differences between the student groups from the onset of the study other than those under investigation. Accordingly, cross-tabular (chi-square) and ANOVA analyses were performed (see Table 3) comparing the groups. All ethnoracial groups were well distributed between the four-high school grades and between both genders. Membership in faith traditions, however, was not well distributed. Religious background, however, was not well distributed. White (90%) and Hispanic (89%) students were disproportionately more Catholic than were the Black (12%) students ( $\chi^2 (2, N = 412) = 2.43, p = .000$ ). This ethnic and racial denominational difference is consistent with national norms for church membership for Catholics and non-Catholics (McDonald, 2007), as well as general historical patterns of church membership (Davis, 1990).

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<sup>47</sup> As this study's research questions target differences between the American White majority and Black and Hispanic minority populations, the questionnaires from the three Asian students were used only for examining the validity of the questionnaire (Research Question #1). The data from the three Asian students were not used for the other research questions. Accordingly, this study's total number of participants fluctuates between 417 and 414 depending on the analysis at hand.

**Table 3**

*Crosstabular Analysis of General Demographics by Ethnoracial Groups I*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Total Mean</b>	<b>White Mean</b>	<b>Black Mean</b>	<b>Hispanic Mean</b>	<b><math>\chi^2</math></b>
Students	414	101	258	55	n.s.
Grade 9	91 (28%)	26 (26%)	73 (28%)	16 (29%)	n.s.
Grade 10	119 (28%)	30 (30%)	76 (29%)	13 (24%)	n.s.
Grade 11	84 (20%)	23 (23%)	46 (18%)	15 (27%)	n.s.
Grade 12	96 (23%)	22 (22%)	63 (24%)	11 (20%)	n.s.
Males	198 (48%)	52 (52%)	117 (45%)	29 (53%)	n.s.
Females	216 (52%)	49 (48%)	141 (55%)	26 (47%)	n.s.
Catholic Denomination	169 (41%)	90 (90%)	30 (12%)	49 (89%)	** .000

\*\*  $p < .001$

As represented in Table 4, further cross-tabular analyses reveal differences between (parental post-secondary education, traditional two-parent household parental makeup, and student participation in school sports and clubs). Accordingly, this analysis revealed a disproportional distribution between the three racial/ethnic groups as to the post-secondary educational levels for the students' mother and father, their membership in two-parent households, and participation in school sports. African

**Table 4**

*Crosstabular Analysis of General Demographics by Ethnoracial Groups II*

Variable	Total Mean	White Mean	Black Mean	Hispanic Mean	$\chi^2$
Mother's Post-HS Ed.	142 (39%)	20 (23%)	103 (44%)	19 (40%)	** .003
Father's Post-HS Ed.	104 (35%)	16 (22%)	73 (40%)	15 (35%)	** .024
Two-Parent Household	176 (44%)	59 (60%)	84 (34%)	33 (60%)	*** .000
Participation in School Sports	215 (52%)	40 (40%)	151 (59%)	24 (44%)	** .002
Participation in School Clubs	142 (34%)	33 (33%)	92 (36%)	17 (31%)	n.s
* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$					

American and Hispanic parents were disproportionately<sup>48</sup> more educated than were the parents of the White students—both being significant. Mothers with post-secondary education and training were 44% for Black students, 40% for Hispanic students, and 23% for White students ( $\chi^2$  (2,  $N = 367$ ) = 11.50,  $p = .003$ ). Similarly, the post-secondary education and training of the fathers of the Black students (40%) and Hispanic students (35%) were disproportionately higher ( $\chi^2$  (2,  $N = 299$ ) = 7.43,  $p = .024$ ) than the fathers of the White students (22%). Also, of significant difference was the parental makeup of the students' homes. Black students were significantly more likely to come from single-

<sup>48</sup> The numbers of missing data for mother and father education items were oddly uncharacteristic when compared to other items. Of the 414 total cases, protocols for post-secondary education for mothers and fathers were only 367 and 299, respectively.



parent homes. Black students came from two-parent household at a rate of 34%, while both White and Hispanics had two-parent houses percents of 60% ( $\chi^2 (2, N = 404) = 27.49, p = .000$ ). While all three racial groups were equally likely to engage in school clubs, the groups were significantly disproportionate in their participation in athletic activities. African American students (59%) were more likely to participate in sports at Central Catholic than were their White (40%) or Hispanic (44%) counterparts ( $\chi^2 (2, N = 414) = 12.16, p = .002$ ).

### *General Comparisons of Means*

Univariate ANOVA tests compared the ethnoracial groups' variables of worship, school attendance, family attendance of Catholic school, friends attending Catholic schools, total discipline points, and family income means (see Table 5). White, Black, and Hispanic students reported similar rates of religious attendance, family attendance of Catholic schools, and the number of friends attending Catholic schools. There were no significant differences. Concerning religious attendance, Hispanics ( $M = 3.22, SD = 3.22$ ) reported the highest attendance of church services, followed by the Black students ( $M = 3.14, SD = 1.78$ ), with White students having the lowest level of religious service attendance ( $M = 2.68, SD = 1.83$ ). Again while not significant, African American students ( $M = 2.86, SD = 1.07$ ) reported having the highest number of family members who attended Catholic schools, followed by White students ( $M = 2.69, SD = 1.15$ ) and Hispanic students ( $M = 2.53, SD = 1.12$ ). While not differing significantly, White students reported the highest number of friends who attend Catholic schools ( $M = 3.00,$

Table 5

*Univariate ANOVA of Student Demographics by Ethnoracial Group*

Variable	Range	Total Student Mean	White Student Mean	Black Student Mean	Hispanic Student Mean	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
Religious service attendance	0-5	3.05	2.68	3.14	3.22	n.s	n.s
Family H.S. graduation rates	0-4	2.78	2.69	2.86	2.53	n.s	n.s
H.S. graduation-minded friends	0-4	2.96	3.00	2.97	2.76	n.s	n.s
Amount of Catholic education	8%-100%	68%	81%	63%	67%	** .000	.06
Discipline points	0-49	7.92	5.75	9.45	5.15	** .000	.05
Gross-family income***	\$5,855-\$160,670	\$39,688	\$45,824	\$37,021	\$42,588	* .012	.02

\*  $p > 0.05$  \*\*  $p > .001$

$SD = .78$ ), followed by African American students ( $M = 2.97$ ,  $SD = .94$ ), and then Hispanic students ( $M = 2.76$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ).

Significant differences between the Hispanic, White, and African American students surfaced as to their number of years (percentage) of Catholic education, their gross family income, and their number of school discipline (school infraction) points. While the overall student body of Cleveland Central Catholic reported an average Catholic education percent of 68% ( $SD = .32$ ), the groups differed significantly ( $F(2, 413) = 12.36$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ ). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for White students ( $M = 81\%$ ,  $SD = .27$ ) was significantly higher than the

mean scores for both their Hispanic ( $M = 68\%$ ,  $SD = .33$ ) and Black ( $M = 63\%$ ,  $SD = .32$ ) counterparts. This difference had a moderate effect size (Cohen, 1988). Hispanic and Black students did not differ significantly. The percentage differences of Catholic education constitute the most significant difference between the ethnoracial groups. It is interesting to note that while White students received more Catholic education than their African American or Hispanic counterparts, they were less likely to attend religious services—but not significantly so.

The school's discipline and family income records reveal a significant difference between the three racial/ethnic groups. African American students received significantly higher numbers of behavior infractions than did White or Hispanic students ( $F(2, 411) = 9.99$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ ), with low moderate effect size. While the average of student discipline points was 7.92 ( $SD = 8.86$ ), White students averaged 5.75 ( $SD = 8.64$ ) and Hispanic students averaged 5.15 ( $SD = 6.75$ ). Black students, however, averaged a significantly higher number than the other groups 9.45 ( $SD = 9.04$ ), according to the Tukey HSD test.

The family incomes of the students reveal significant differences between the groups ( $F(2, 299) = 4.44$ ,  $p = .012$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ ), with low effect size. Based on the gross annual income from each family's IRS 1040,<sup>49</sup> the school's family incomes have a range of \$155,015 (between \$5,885 and \$160,670), an average of \$39,865 ( $SD = 25,940$ ), a mode of \$36,154, and a median of \$32,171. Percentage measurements are as follows: \$22,544 (25<sup>th</sup> percentile), \$32,171 (50<sup>th</sup> percentile), and \$51,451 (75<sup>th</sup> percentile). Post-hoc comparison

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<sup>49</sup> For this year, 405 student families submitted IRS document, leaving 12 missing cases.

using the Tukey HSD test indicate that the Black families averaged a significantly lower yearly income of \$37,021 ( $SD = 25911$ ), than the White families average of \$45,824 ( $SD = 25012$ ). Hispanic families average income \$42,588 ( $SD = 26091$ ) was not significantly different than either of the two other groups. Considering the school's tuition cost, all families contribute a large amount of their income (see Figure 1 again) to attend this school, though some groups contribute a larger share. Accordingly, the \$5,800-tuition cost represents approximately 15% of the school's average families' total income.<sup>50</sup>

The academic data (cumulative GPA and the five-subtests for the OGT) from the school were matched with each of the students' profiles. The academic indicators varied between the ethnoracial groups (see Table 6), but mildly significant differences were only present in GPA, Math OGT, and Science OGT academic indicators. The effect sizes for these three differences were low, ranging between eta squares of .02 and .03. Within this sampling of 95% of the student population, the average GPA is 2.50 ( $SD = .72$ ).

Univariate ANOVA testing revealed significant differences between the groups ( $F(2,413) = 3.87, p = .022, \eta^2 = .02$ ). Subgroups analysis reveals an average GPA of 2.68 ( $SD = .74$ ) for Hispanic, 2.58 ( $SD = .75$ ) for White students, and 2.43 ( $SD = .70$ ) for Black students.

Tukey post-hoc HSD testing demonstrated that minority-classified Hispanic students

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<sup>50</sup> It is again important to note that most students at Cleveland Central Catholic High School receive various forms of financial assistance: work study, Cleveland voucher subsidies (\$3105 or \$2587.50 depending on family income), grants, subsidies from the diocese, school fundraisers (auctions and bingo), interest from previous capital campaigns, and donations from private individuals. Additionally, there are segments of this population who default on tuition payments. Accordingly, Thomas Tamasi, Director of Student Accounts, states that the budget for the year of this study reveals \$1,241,000 in financial assistance. Even with this assistance, the budget ran a deficit of \$437,000 (personal conversation, February 16, 2009). Despite these measures throughout the year, according to Karl Ertle, President/Principal of Cleveland Central Catholic High School, the school always runs a yearly deficit (personal communication, February 13, 2009).

obtained not only the highest GPA but that they were significantly higher than their African American counterparts ( $p = .043$ ). White students differed from both the Hispanic and Black students, but not significantly so.

**Table 6**

*Univariate ANOVA of Academic Indicators by Ethnoracial Group*

Variable	Range	Total Mean	White Mean	Black Mean	Hispanic Mean	$p$	$\eta^2$
GPA	.525-4.2	2.50	2.58	2.42	2.68	*.022	.02
Writing OGT	343-487	420	421	420	420	n.s	n.s
Reading OGT	237-490	423	422	422	424	n.s	n.s
Social Studies OGT	334-498	410	411	408	410	n.s	n.s
Math OGT	349-498	409	413	406	411	*.042	.02
Science OGT	335-469	402	407	399	408	*.004	.03

\*  $p > 0.05$  \*\*  $p > .001$

While the writing, reading, and social studies OGT-averaged scores had no significant difference between ethnoracial groups, math and science OGT scores differed at a mildly significant rate (again see Table 6). Univariate ANOVA tests reveal significant differences between groups as to the Math OGT average scores ( $F(2, 413) = 3.20, p = .042, \eta^2 = .03$ ). Accordingly, a Tukey post-hoc examination was performed. While White and Hispanic students obtained similar Math average scores of 413 ( $SD = 26.89$ ) and 411 ( $SD = 22.80$ ), Black students' scores 406 ( $SD = 22.27, p = .045$ ) were slightly significantly lower than the White students' average but not from the Hispanic students.

The Univariate ANOVA test of the OGT science scores differences were more significant ( $F(2,413) = 5.58, p = .004, \eta^2 = .03$ ). While both White and Hispanic students both scored an average of 407 ( $SD = 29.08$ ) and 408 ( $SD = 28.44$ ), respectively, Black students received an average score of 399 ( $SD = 21.70$ ). The Tukey Post-Hoc was performed on these three group scores. While White and Hispanic students' averages did not differ significantly, White and Black student's average differed significantly ( $p = .012$ ) while Hispanic and Black students' average showed only approximately mild significance ( $p = .056$ ). It is important to note that the minority-classified Hispanic students outperformed the White students by one point.

To further test the differences between the groups, an ANOVA examining any differences by gender was also conducted (see Table 7). A comparison of GPA, math

**Table 7**

*Academic Indicators Disaggregated by Race and Gender*

Race & Gender	GPA Mean (SD)	Math OGT Mean (SD)	Science OGT Mean (SD)
White males (n = 52)	2.29 (.58)	415.54 (24.51)	408.63 (28.70)
White females (n = 49)	2.90 (.77)	410.43 (29.23)	405.96 (29.71)
Black males (n = 117)	2.19 (.63)	406.04 (22.04)	397.85 (22.73)
Black females (n = 141)	2.62 (.70)	406.79 (22.53)	400.04 (20.84)
Hispanic males (n = 29)	2.65 (.67)	411.24 (22.12)	407.86 (31.88)
Hispanic females (n = 26)	2.72 (.79)	410.96 (23.98)	407.08 (24.66)
Total (N = 414)	2.50 (.72)	408.68 (23.68)	402.19 (24.9)

OGT, and science OGT means failed to reveal any significant difference by gender.

While GPA means for the females tended to be higher than those of the males for all ethnoracial groups, the OGT results were varied, with Hispanic students having the closest gender equity.

### *Research Question 1:*

*What are the dimensions of school climate within this school?*

### *Instrumental Factor Analysis*

Beginning in 1994, I started using the basis of this study's school climate instrument, continuously using, adapting, and refining it over the years. The instrument, however, has only undergone serious evaluation when I presented it and its findings at the Mid-Western Educational Research Association's Annual Conference in 2006. Specifically, via an exploratory factor analysis I (Hollis, 2006) found that the items loaded into 11 factors: extra-curricular values, respect, teacher attributes, religious components, social fondness, and student's perceptions of treatment equality (see Appendix B). The previous work had a purpose based in school accreditation and school improvement planning and validation that were not directly related to school climate. Accordingly, from six-of-the-11-climate factors, a subset of items was used to examine the specific elements of school climate examined in this present study (see Appendices C & D). Some of these factors were not used in this present study due to lack of application to the research questions. Accordingly, five previous factors were eliminated—that is, those related to the physical plant, progressive instruction, quality

program, real-world instruction, and technology. While these factors were good indicators of validity based on factor loadings, this study sought to reexamine the items related to the topic of school climate.

In this study, the school climate subset was analyzed to see how specific factors coalesce. The 34 –school-climate items examined with SPSS’s Principal Component Analysis as the component extraction method and Varimax with Kaiser Normalization as the component rotation method. The Rotation Component Matrix identified four factors: teacher caring, school religiosity, school community, and school respect. Items loaded well<sup>51</sup> with eigenvalues suppressed under values of .30 (see Table 8 and Appendix I). While some present characteristics were similar with the previous study, differences were enough to merit new names for the factors. Moreover, the factors for the present study’s Cronbach’s alphas are stronger. While the six factors from the 2006 study ranged from Cronbach’s alphas between .9 and .68 (see Appendix C), the present study’s Cronbach’s alphas were between .92 and .82.

**Table 8**  
*School Climate Factors*

Factor Name	Number of Items	Cronbach’s alpha
Teacher Caring Factor	11	.921
School Religiosity Factor	12	.897
School Community Factor	6	.892
Student Respect Factor	5	.815

<sup>51</sup> Two items did not load into these four factors. They loaded individually and were deleted. These items were: Item 52—Participating in extracurricular activities is important to me; and Item 72—My teachers challenge me to do better.



### *Ethnoracial Differences in School Climate Factors*

While the overall school climate factors obtained overall positive ratings from the students on the five-point Likert scale, they differed: Teacher Caring ( $M = 4.47$ ), School Community ( $M = 4.40$ ), School Religiosity ( $M = 4.08$ ), and School Respect ( $M = 4.01$ ). To continue to examine the indices of school climate, each of the four factors were examined via a Univariate ANOVA to test if any of the variable means differed according to ethnoracial group membership (see Table 9).<sup>52</sup> While there was variability within the mean scores, White students rated teacher caring highest, Black students rated school religiosity and student respect highest. Hispanic students scored highest on the school community factor. No group mean, however, was significantly different from the other groups. This again would seem to indicate instrumental validity.

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<sup>52</sup> To further test the instrument, I also examined gender differences on the four factors. While Syvertsen, Flanagan, and Stout (2009) assert that female students have a tendency to express more intimacy, communicate more openly, and score higher on affective components of school climate, the female students in this study significantly differed from the males students on only two of the four factors on a One-way ANOVA. While the female students ( $M = 4.49$ ,  $SD = .92$ ) scored higher than the males ( $M = 4.30$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ) on Community Feelings, males students ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = .95$ ) score School Respect higher than did their female ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = .9$ ) counterparts—though neither factor was significantly different based on gender. Male and female students, however, did significantly differ as to their perceptions of Teacher Caring and School Religiosity, with the female students rating both measures significantly higher. Concerning the School Religiosity Factor, female students ( $M = 4.26$ ,  $SD = .79$ ) rated the school slightly significantly higher than did their males counterparts ( $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = .87$ ), which was mildly significant ( $F(1, 416) = 3.78$ ,  $p = .053$ ). Moreover, female students ( $M = 4.59$ ,  $SD .79$ ) rated the Teacher Caring Factor of the school significantly higher than the boys ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ). This measure was the strongest gender difference in school climate ( $F(1, 416) = 7.67$ ,  $p = .006$ ). While these gender differences within two of the four factors are clearly present, they tend to complement a general gender difference in the population (see Syvertsen, Flanagan, & Stout, 2009). Accordingly, this expected gender difference does not necessarily weaken the validity of this instrument.

**Table 9*****Univariate ANOVA of School Climate Factors by Ethnoracial Groups***

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Total Mean</b>	<b>White Mean</b>	<b>Black Mean</b>	<b>Hispanic Mean</b>	<b><i>p</i></b>
Teacher Caring Factor	1-6	4.47	4.60	4.40	4.51	n.s
School Religiosity Factor	1-6	4.08	4.01	4.11	4.05	n.s
School Community Factor	1-6	4.40	4.34	4.39	4.47	n.s
Student Respect Factor	1-6	4.01	3.90	4.05	3.98	n.s

Lastly, the four factors were compared for internal consistency and correlations (see Table 10). While each of the factors loaded separately into each of the four factors and each factor's Cronbach's alpha was above .89, Pearson correlations found that four factors were significant ( $p < .001$ ). These correlations would seem to indicate good internal validity within this administration of the instrument. Accordingly, it appears a sound tool on which to advance to the further research questions. Additionally, while these factors were significantly correlated (i.e., all under  $r < .70$  and ranging from medium to high correlations according to Cohen, 1988), that correlation was not such as would render subsequent multiple regression analyses using these school climate factors as independent variables tainted by multicollinearity.

**Table 10*****Correlations Among School Climate Factors***

		Teacher caring	School Religiosity	Comm- unity	Respect
Teacher Caring Factor	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	417			
School Religiosity Factor	Pearson Correlation	.663**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	417	417		
School Community Factor	Pearson Correlation	.610**	.594**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	417	417	417	
Student Respect Factor	Pearson Correlation	.406**	.516**	.582**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	417	417	417	417

\*\* p < .001 level (2-tailed).

***Research Question 2:***

***What are the demographic and climate factors that correlate***

***with school academic achievement?***

To investigate the second research question as to any relationships between the variables, the continuous non-dichotomous variables were subjected to the Pearson correlation tests to explore if there was interaction between the coefficients. The variables are as follows according to general categories:

#### Academic Achievement Indicators

- Cumulative GPA
- Math OGT
- Reading OGT
- Science OGT
- Social Studies OGT
- Writing OGT

#### Demographic Variables

- Family income
- Family members as high-school graduates
- Friends as high-school graduates

#### General School Variables

- Attendance (absences)
- Discipline points
- General school climate factor: school community
- General school climate factor: student respect
- General school climate factor: teacher caring

#### Catholic School Variables

- Attendance of religious services
- Catholic school factor: school religiosity
- Percentage of Catholic school education

Important interactions tended to cluster around academic achievement indicators, percentage of Catholic education, friends who attend Catholic schools, number of discipline points, and the school religiosity climate factor. As one would expect, the academic achievement indicators correlated with one another very significantly (see Table 11). Additionally and as stated above in Table 9, the school climate factors possess highly significant levels of correlation. Due to the high degrees of significant

**Table 11**

*Correlations Among Academic Achievement Indicators*

		GPA	Writ. OGT	Read. OGT	Mat h OGT	Soc. Sts. OGT	Sci. OGT
School GPA	Pearson Correlation	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
	N	417					
Writing OGT	Pearson Correlation	.443**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000					
	N	417	417				
Reading OGT	Pearson Correlation	.346**	.641**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000				
	N	417	417	417			
Math OGT	Pearson Correlation	.452**	.561**	.521**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000			
	N	417	417	417	417		
Social Studies OGT	Pearson Correlation	.413**	.570**	.631**	.634**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		
	N	417	417	417	417	417	
Science OGT	Pearson Correlation	.443**	.629**	.647**	.714**	.771**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	417	417	417	417	417	417

\*\*\*p < .001 level (2-tailed).

correlation among these six academic achievement indicators, I concluded that all six variables would not be necessary. Additionally, as three of these variables had some

low-level differences between the ethnoracial groups, I decided to use them for further analysis when investigating Research Question 3. These three variables were school cumulative GPA, math OGT, and science OGT. Next I will turn to the correlations between the remaining variables. I will discuss them as they relate to academics and each other. Moreover, while these correlations between the academic achievement variables were significant, each of the correlations was below .70. This would indicate that subsequent multiple regression analyses using these three academic achievement indicators as independent variables would not be subjected to multicollinearity.

### *Demographic Variable Correlates*

The study's demographic continuous variables were examined for relationships. The three variables of family income, Catholic-schooled family members, and high-school-graduation-minded friends found multiple significant relationships (see Table 12). The variable of graduation-minded friends proved to be a nexus of correlation, significantly correlating with all six academic achievement indications, the respect school climate factor, and Catholic-schooled family. The friendship patterns of graduation-minded students appear to have significant importance for these students. Of lesser relationship was the demographic variable of family income that positively correlated with the number of family members schooled in Catholic education,  $r(405) = .17, p = .000$ . It would appear likely that families with greater wealth would have more of its members educated in a tuition-based school system.

**Table 12**

*Correlates for General Demographics*

Variable	Correlating Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
High-school- graduation- minded friends	School GPA	413	.223	.000***
	Writing OGT	413	.188	.000***
	Reading OGT	413	.195	.000***
	Math OGT	413	.244	.000***
	Science OGT	413	.256	.000***
	Family who attended Catholic schools	413	.329	.000***
	Social studies OGT	413	.154	.02*
	Student respect factor	413	.098	.046*
Family who attended Catholic schools	Family Income	405	.172	.000***

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

*Academic Correlates with General School Variables*

General school and academic variables also produced significant correlations (see Table 13). In addition to all academic variables correlating positive with higher numbers of high school graduation-minded friends, the cumulative GPAs correlated with the school climate factor of teacher caring and the percent of Catholic education. The variable of percent of Catholic schooling appears related to high GPA.

Additionally, GPA, all OGT subtests, and the teacher caring factor negatively correlated with the students' discipline points. It would also appear that both better, more pro-school and pro-social behavior and positive opinion of teacher caring and academic indicators are also related.

**Table 13**

*Correlations for General School Variables*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Correlating Variable</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b><i>r</i></b>	<b><i>p</i></b>
Student GPA	Discipline Points	417	-.429	.000
	Teacher Caring Factor	417	.207	.000
	Friends as High School Graduates	413	.223	.000
	Percent of Catholic Education	417	.116	.018
Discipline Points	School GPA	417	-.429	.000***
	Social Studies OGT	417	-.225	.000***
	Science OGT	417	-.230	.000***
	Writing OGT	417	-.161	.001***
	Math OGT	417	-.155	.001**
	Teacher Caring Factor	417	-.158	.001**
	Reading OGT	417	-.151	.002**

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

*Academic Correlates with Catholic School Variables*

Table 14 represents the two uniquely Catholic-school variables along with the variable of general church attendance. The Catholic-school variables of percent of Catholic education and school religiosity school climate factors likewise had many correlates. Greater percentages of Catholic education correlated positively with all the academic variables (i.e., higher GPAs and OGT scores), but, as stated above, it negatively correlated with church attendance.



**Table 14**

*Correlations for Percent of Catholic Educations*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Correlating Variable</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b><i>r</i></b>	<b><i>p</i></b>
Percent of Catholic Education	Attendance at worship	417	-.15	.002**
	Reading OGT	417	.14	.005**
	Science OGT	417	.13	.008**
	School GPA	417	.12	.016*
	Social studies OGT	417	.13	.021*
	Writing OGT	417	.11	.025*
	Math OGT	417	.10	.045*
Student Worship	Percent of Catholic education	417	-.151	.002**
	Community feeling factor	417	.147	.003**
	Teacher caring factor	417	.134	.006**
	School religiosity factor	417	.125	.011*
School Religiosity	Reading OGT	417	-.227	.000***
	Social Studies OGT	417	-.174	.000***
	Science OGT	417	-.186	.000***
	Writing OGT	417	-.127	.01*
	Attendance at worship	417	.125	.01
	Math OGT	417	-.114	.02

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Of particular interest here are the correlations related to the school's religiosity school climate factor. While student perceptions of the school's religiosity positively correlated with Sunday worship, it negatively correlated with all of the OGT subtests. Stated differently, this school religiosity factor correlated negatively with all academic variables except for the school's cumulative GPA.

While the frequency of worship had multiple correlations (see again Table 14), it positively correlated with higher student opinions on the three school climate factors of school community, teacher caring, and the school religiosity. Surprisingly, however, the frequency of student worship negatively correlated with greater amounts of Catholic school education. This curious finding will be treated at length later.

Of special importance to this research is the rarely used, if not new, variable of percentage of Catholic education. As stated above, the finding of a negative correlation between the students' religiosity view of the school and percentage of Catholic schooling is interesting. The positive correlations, however, between higher percentages of Catholic education and all six academic achievement indicators would appear more important. While these relationships had generally small correlations (Cohen, 1988), the possible academic importance is present. Accordingly, one could argue that these statistical significances would support the notion that the percentage, or length, of Catholic education is a type of Catholic school academic effect. The results from the regression analyses in Research Question 3, however, will be both more weighty and important.

### *Research Question 3:*

*Does the length of Catholic school experience, school climate measurements, race, wealth, or other demographics impact or predict academic achievement?*

Three multiple linear stepwise regression models were developed using GPA, science OGT, and math OGT indicators of academic success as dependent measures.

The independent variables were taken from the following categories: student demographics, general school variables, and Catholic school variables. Specifically, the individual variables were as follows:

Dependent variables: academic achievement variables

- GPA
- Math OGT
- Science OGT

Predictive variables: demographics variables

- Faith tradition
- Family income
- Father's post-high school education
- Gender
- H.S. graduate family members
- H.S. graduation-minded friends
- Minority/majority status
- Mother's post-high school education
- Specific ethnoracial group
- Traditional two-parent family makeup

Predictive variables: general school variables

- Attendance (absences)
- Discipline points

- Participation in school clubs
- Participation in school sports

Predictive variables: Catholic school variables

- Catholic school climate: school religiosity factor
- Percentage of Catholic school education

Predictive variables: general and Catholic school climate variables

- Frequency of religious service attendance
- School community feelings factor
- Student respect factor
- Teacher caring factor

### *Stepwise Linear Regression Analysis*

The regression analyses used stepwise entry to determine the best model for each of the three dependent variables of academic achievement: cumulative GPA, math OGT, and science OGT. The statistical analyses from the SPSS computations focused on identifying the best model and predictor set of independent variables for each dependent variable using  $R^2$  as a criterion. Comparing the Betas of each model allowed for determining how much each independent variable could predict higher cumulative GPA obtained in classes at Cleveland Central Catholic and higher standardized subtest scores on the math and science Ohio Graduation Tests.

For student GPAs, the stepwise regression analysis returned significant coefficients for seven variables. Discipline points, gender, high school graduation-minded friends, participation in clubs, participation in sports, and perceptions of teacher caring and school religiosity were important predictors of academic success as

determined by GPA. These predictors accounted for 29.7% of the variance (see Table 15). Students who held greater numbers of discipline behavior points at school were

**Table 15**

*Stepwise Linear Regression Analysis for the Prediction of GPA*

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>Adj R</i> <sup>2</sup>
(Constant)	2.146	.195		
Discipline points	-.029	.003	-.356***	
Gender	-.251	.064	-.174***	
H.S. graduation-minded friends	.120	.032	.156***	.297
Student's participation in clubs	.198	.066	.130**	
Student's participation in sport activities	.159	.061	.110**	
Teacher caring factors	.141	.045	.176**	
School religiosity factors	-.104	.048	-.120*	

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$

more likely to earn lower academic GPAs, while those who held more negative views of the school's religiosity were more likely to have higher GPAs. The gender variable predicted that male students would be more likely to have lower GPAs than their female classmates.

Cleveland Central Catholic students who participated in school clubs and in school sports and those who identified with having higher numbers of friends who were, or were likely, to be high school graduates had higher GPAs. Lastly, students who rated the teacher-caring climate measurement higher and those who rated the school's religiosity climate factor lower had higher cumulative GPA scores. A review of the

scatter plot of standardized predicted values versus standardized residuals showed linear and equal variable distribution, indicating that this analysis was a good fit.

For the examination of the math OGT results, the stepwise regression analysis returned significant coefficients for six variables (see Table 16). High school graduation-minded friends, participation in school clubs, the school religiosity factor, the teacher caring factor, gender, and discipline points were significant predictors of higher math OGT standardized scores. The variables accounted for 15% of the total variance.

Accordingly, higher math OGT standardized scores could be predicted based on the students' lower perceptions of the school's religiosity climate factor and higher perceptions on the teacher caring climate factor. Moreover, students who participated in school clubs and those who have higher number of high school graduate-minded friends were more likely to have high scores on the Math OGT. Gender difference and

**Table 16**

*Stepwise Linear Regression Analysis of the Prediction of Math OGT Scores*

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>Adj R<sup>2</sup></i>
(Constant)	394.402	7.048		
H.S. graduation-minded friends	5.637	1.157	.223***	
Participation in clubs at CCC	8.566	2.374	.171***	
School religiosity factor	-8.209	1.735	-.288***	.15
Teacher caring factor	6.295	1.624	.240***	
Gender	5.493	2.266	.116*	
Discipline points	-.298	.126	-.111*	

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$

discipline point variables indicate that male students and those students who have higher numbers of behavioral infractions would score lower on Math OGT. A review of the scatter plot of standardized predicted values versus standardized residuals showed linear and equal variable distribution, indicating that this analysis was a good fit.

On examining the predictive values of the variables for the science OGT, the stepwise regression analysis returned significant coefficients for five variables (see Table 17). High school graduation-minded friends, discipline points, the school religiosity

**Table 17**

*Stepwise Linear Regression Analysis for the Prediction of the Science OGT Scores*

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>Adj</i> <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
(Constant)	404.044	7.060		
H.S. graduation-minded friends	6.200	1.196	.233***	
Discipline points	-.507	.129	-.180***	
School religiosity factor	-9.759	1.795	-.326***	.176
Teacher caring factor	4.854	1.680	.176**	
Participation in clubs	6.416	2.394	.122**	

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$

climate factor, teacher caring climate factor, and participation in school clubs were significant predictors of higher academic success as determined by the science OGT standardized scores. These variables accounted for 17.6% of the total variance. Students with more high school graduation-minded friends scored higher on science OGT, while those with lower discipline points and higher scores on the religiosity climate factor

scored higher. Lastly, student involvement in school clubs also predicted better results on the science OGT. A review of the scatter plot of standardized predicted values versus standardized residuals showed linear and equal variable distribution, indicating that this analysis was a good fit.

In summary, when examining all three regression analyses for predictors of higher academic indicators, only seven of the 19 variables proved significant. Five predictors were common to all three GPA, math OGT, and science OGT models: discipline points, club participation, high-school-graduation-minded friends, the teacher caring climate factor, and the school climate religiosity factor. Gender was common to two models, while participation in school sports was predictive to only one model. Twelve factors commonly associated with school achievement, however, were not significant in any of the three models: race, minority status, two-parent family background, family income, parent's and family education, school attendance, percentage of Catholic schooling, faith tradition, the school community climate factor, or school respect climate factor. Of most importance to the literature on the achievement gap and this present study is the absence of following variables as predictors: race, minority students, family education, and wealth. These findings challenge the commonly held assumptions of a great deal of research.



#### *Research Question 4:*

*What input and insights do recent graduates from this school have  
about the data from this research?*

Three small focus groups discussed the general results and findings from the last three research questions in an effort to add insights and deeper meaning to the present study. Generally, the students were representative of the student body in race, ethnicity, gender, background education, and post-secondary activities (see Table 18). The students represented a broad spectrum of post-secondary choices from work, two-year college to four-year college attendance at a variety of institutions including a historically Black college, a Catholic college, and small and very large universities. The focus group's discussion was audio taped and transcribed by this researcher. In this way, the nuances and nonverbals might be better reflected in the transcriptions.

On December 19 and 20, 2008, the three focus groups were conducted over the course of two days (Friday evening and Saturday morning) during the high school's Christmas holiday and an alumni-night basketball game. Full demographic data can be found in Table 18. One group was held before the basketball game (5 alumni), one afterwards (4 alumni), and one the following morning (3 alumni). A total of 23 alumni were invited, with 12 participating. Initial agreement to participate seemed to wane with the lateness of Saturday night. Nevertheless, the 12 students constituted a generally representative group of the participants from this study, though all three White alumni were the sole participants in the Saturday morning focus group. There were equal numbers (N = 12) from the graduating classes of 2008 and 2007. Ethnicity

**Table 18***Demographic Data of Focus Group Participants*

<b>FG</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Class</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Current Education</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Elementary Background</b>	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>City</b>
#1	Memo	2008 SLD	Hispanic	Cleveland Inst. of Art	male	Montessori Public School K-8	Yes	Cleveland
#1	Toni	2007	Black	Ohio State University	female	K-2 Catholic; suburb: 3-5, 6-7 magnet, & 8	No	Euclid
#1	Hazel	2007	Black	Ohio State University	female	K-2 Catholic; suburb: 3-5, 6-8 magnet	No	Euclid
#1	Bob	2008	Black	Bowling Green S.U.	male	K-2 Christian School; Hope Academy 3-8	No	Cleveland
#1	Alberto	2008	Hispanic	Kent State	male	K-8 Cleveland	Yes	Cleveland
#2	Mike	2008	Black	Ohio State University	male	K-2 Cleveland; 3-8 Catholic	No	Cleveland
#2	Daisy	2008	Black	H.B.C. in Alabama	female	K-8 Catholic	No	Cleveland
#2	Casey	2008	Black	Tri-C	female	K-8 Catholic	Yes	Cleveland
#2	Omar	2007	Black	Work	male	K-8 Catholic	No	Cleveland
#3	Pete	2007	White	Work	male	K-8 Cleveland	Yes	Lakewood
#3	Dave	2007	White	University of Dayton	male	K-4 Catholic; 5 public; 6-8 Catholic	Yes	Cleveland
#3	Jordan	2007	White	Muskingum College	male	K-8 Catholic	Yes	Cleveland

consisted of three White students, seven Black students, and two Hispanic students. Of the 12 students, one student had a specific learning disability diagnosis and had participated in specialized high school classes at Cleveland Central Catholic. The participants' genders consisted of eight males and four females. Their post-high school choices were: two students in full-time work, one student in a two-year community college in Cleveland, six students in four-year public universities in Ohio, one student in a Catholic college in Ohio, one student in a professional career university (The Cleveland Institute of Art), and one student in a Historically Black College (H.B.C.) in Alabama.

All focus groups followed a discussion/question model (i.e., topic guide and questions route according to Krueger, 1998) based on the study's research questions and a handout of the research findings (see Appendix M). The discussion for each focus group was audiotaped and then transcribed by this researcher who also served as the focus group's facilitator. The students were presented with the study's findings and asked to discuss their thoughts relative to the research: thoughts that resounded with the findings, judgments and opinions that ran contrary, and experiences and feelings that could help to further understand the research. The transcripts from the discussion were analyzed for common themes. Six themes emerged: African American feelings about academics and discipline; the impact of clubs and common activities; various faiths<sup>53</sup> and faith levels at the school; differences in parental wealth, education, and

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<sup>53</sup> Whenever possible and in an effort not to identify people by negation—that is, as “non-Catholic”—I will often use the more cumbersome phrase of “students of faiths other than Catholic.”

academic push; the urban Catholic education as an egalitarian training ground for life; and the school as a family of peers and caring adults.

*“... there’s a line that you don’t cross” – African Americans Feelings About Academics and Discipline – Theme 1*

The focus groups discussed racial differences at length with emphasis on their perceived differences between the races as to academics, behavior, and social pressures. Participants reported that the notion of “acting White” was well known to the students. Toni stated that, “A lot of Black students feel that if they are achieving well, that other Black kids will perceive them as acting White. So I think that a lot of times they don’t excel as high as they can—to reach that level because of the other Black students.” Differences in perception can exist between siblings in the same family according to Bob, “My brother does that all the time to me: He says I am talking White. I still don’t understand.” Bob’s younger brother does not attend Catholic school.

The African American students in the focus group did not feel much personal pressure based on this possible stigma of acting White in relation to their academic performance. In fact they rejected the logic of the assertion. Summarizing much of the discussion, Casey stated: “I don’t understand how you can ‘act White’. If there is a certain ‘correct’ way to speak, maybe White people speak that way more often, but it is not *their* [her emphasis] way of speaking.” Concerning the idea of language correction by teachers, especially related to dialects or colloquial ways of speaking, Casey believed that correction was done by the teachers to better the students. She stated: “It’s an

educated way of speaking. So you can't say acting White is speaking educated. So when you correct kids, you're trying to make them better. You're not trying to force them into something—you're trying to make them better."

As a whole, the focus groups believed that a negative academic peer pressure is significant for African American students. From her childhood, Toni tells: "So when I went to middle school [public first ring suburb] there was this girl who was really smart, and she started getting D's and F's and I asked her, 'What's going on?' She said, I want to be popular.' And she was African American and she said she wanted to be popular, so she stopped doing her work, so the African Americans would accept her more."

Students believe that this negative academic push/pull and peer pressure are greater for black boys. Omar states that this happens without clear future planning. He states:

Students, who don't know where they are going, tag along with other people.

Many tag along and look up to sports people, because they think it's cool. They don't know who they are, and they want to be popular. They want to be looked up to by other people, and, unfortunately, they think they have to be like this person, as opposed to being like themselves. They don't see the true potential in themselves.

The Black males in these groups were not able to identify why they were unduly influenced by these social pressures. The academic role of their mothers, however, did reoccur in discussion.

The groups believe that peer pressure to be popular extends to discipline and the greater number of behavioral infractions for Black boys than those for Black girls, White students, or Hispanic students. Daisy stated that the higher infraction numbers for Black boys “doesn’t surprise me. It’s not surprising.” Casey ties the two notions together: “It’s peer pressure for popularity for Blacks.” Omar echoes the idea that rebellion is cool: “A lot of times, it’s a kind of rebellion-type of thing. Unfortunately, the people who are participating in more sports and things of that nature are seen as cool kids amongst the Black community; they tend to be rebellious, and again it falls into peer pressure; whereas that is seen as a kind of the cool thing to do.” Toni tells the instance of the social pressure in a neighboring public school district. “In Shaker, some of the students see school as a social type thing. I had a friend and she transferred from Central to Shaker, and she said, “This school [Central] is so boring.” It is one thing for school to be fun, with extracurricular activities, but actual school is to learn. She now is going to school for fun and not to learn. I think that the educational process and the learning process are being swayed by that— they think that school is supposed to be fun, like coming to school for fashion, coming to school to look cute. I think that is a major difference between schools like Central and Shaker.” Alberto sees the issues of differences, showiness, and fashion to be answered by the use of the uniforms (something that many Cleveland Municipal Schools have recently implemented). He stated:

Uniforms, they cure the gap about making you feel different. Because, there are some people who can’t afford name brand clothes or they are not always going

to look their best. And those that can will always point it out: “Oh, look at you, you’re wearing those shoes? Those are just so ugly. Why are you dressed like that? What’s your problem?” In a school with uniforms, you know you are there to learn. You are not there to focus on fashion. You are not to focus on people’s looks. No, it’s just another uniform—so let’s get back to work, man.

There seems to be comfort in their academic experience of uniformity of purpose and appearance. In the mind of these students, the adolescent time of psychological stressors is marked by peer and social pressures that often runs counter to those traits necessary for educational single-mindedness. I cannot argue, however, that this social and peer influence is significantly different for these former students from Central Catholic and students from the general population. There does, however, appear to be something in these African American students—including the student<sup>54</sup> who did not pursue post-secondary education at this time—that seems to have insulated them from some of the pressures and tensions of the social phenomenon of “acting White,”<sup>55</sup> as associated with academic desire and achievement. Additionally, in these groups, there is a certain *academic seriousness* that they voice when discussing their past and present educational experiences.

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<sup>54</sup> While Omar was not enrolled in post-secondary education at this time, he is very positive about his experience and hopes to return to formal education when he is financially able.

<sup>55</sup> Fordham and Ogbu (1986) offer a litany of activities that are perceived as “acting white” and therefore unacceptable, at least, to the African American students at their Capital High: 1) speaking standard English; 2) listening to White music and White radio stations; 3) going to the opera or the ballet; 4) spending a lot of time in the library studying; 5) working hard to get good grades in school; 6) getting good grades in school; 7) going to the Smithsonian; 8) going to a Rolling Stones concert; 9) doing volunteer work; 10) going camping, hiking, or mountain climbing; 11) having cocktails or a cocktail party; 12) going to a symphony orchestra concert; 13) having a party with no music; 14) listening to classical music; 15) being on time; 16) reading and writing poetry; and 17) putting on “airs” (p. 186).

When asked about the differences in disciplinary records between the ethnoracial groups at Central Catholic and if the disproportionate number of infraction points for African Americans had some sort of unfair or racist underpinning, the group asserted strongly “No!” Jordon states: “No, because the rules were rules for all of us. It just happens to be that they were more broken by the Blacks.” Hazel was quick to remind everyone that the disciplinarian of the school is African American. Many students discussed a disciplinary line that students know or do not know to cross. David discusses the interplay that a student can have with a teacher within certain parameters. He states: “There was always the respect there. You can joke around; you can try to have fun, but if it gets to that point—if it gets to that line, there’s that line that you don’t cross. You don’t, you just don’t. I’m not really a “brown-noser,” but I never cross the line to where it turned to a fight. I would always back down to somebody, a teacher. I’m not going to push that.” Hazel put it differently: “Black kids just try to be tough.”<sup>56</sup> When you look at White kids versus Black kids, White kids will be quiet. Black kids will just keep going.” Toni states that this confrontational “line crossing” is about not losing face. She thinks that this phenomenon leads to arguments between Black students and authority figures. She states, “They just want to argue, they want to argue more. It’s not about you being an adult, it’s about them losing, bowing down to a teacher in front of their friends. Like a teacher that calls them out in front of their friends—it’s like, ““Oh

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<sup>56</sup> Osborne (1999) describes similar behaviors and posturing in terms of broader social motivational theory: Steele’s stereotype threat, Ogbu’s oppositional theory, and Majors and Billson’s “cool pose” theory.



no! You're frontin'!<sup>57</sup> You know that your mom will say that you don't talk to an adult that way, yet your friends have an influence over you. Friends have such a big influence over kids, it's ridiculous."

The groups also believed that African American boys also have issues when it comes to asking for academic help and tutoring. Asking for help does not appear to be "cool." Mike states: "Sometimes people don't grasp the concepts in math, and they be too embarrassed about it, so they don't ask for help. They usually don't get help. Or they usually be mostly girls that get the help, instead of boys. . . . From my experience, it's more likely that girls will get help or ask for help than a boy. Especially an African American boy? . . . Uh-huh." Some students believe "saving face" again might be involved.

*"I think that involvement in clubs helps you to focus on things"—The Impact of Clubs and Common Activities—Theme 2*

Students generally supported the finding that participation in clubs and extracurricular activities helps with academic pursuits. They thought, however, that the school's "club culture" was less than vigorous. Memo stated: "I think that involvement in clubs helps you to focus on things. When you're not involved in clubs and after-school activities, you get into other things, like sex and going to places after school and not focusing on doing your homework." He continued: "Students who get into a pattern of sports, clubs, and academics have to really maintain a schedule and work and

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<sup>57</sup> For most of the students in my focus groups, "frontin[g]" has two general meanings: putting on airs or belittling. The usage here is the latter.

be a student and not go do whatever they want, since they don't have a lot of free time."

Dave could see the relationship between clubs and academics, but he also thinks it is odd. As he puts it, "The club culture here wasn't really . . . that big, like: Scrapbook Club, Video Game Club. And some didn't meet that often. The clubs that we listed [in the school's publications] probably met the most—some clubs met twice a year." Dave does admit, however, that "[p]articipation in school clubs, that gets you more involved—you're around the place more." Students also pointed out that some activities (e.g., National Honor Society and sports) had an academic requirement. While the National Honor Society generally requires high academics, the Cleveland Central Catholic Grace Chapter is highly selective. During the year of the study, the National Honor Society chapter consisted of only nine students from the 440-student body.

Athletic participation is radically different. The school follows the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) guidelines that require that an athlete must have passing grades in the equivalent of five credits with at least a 1.0 GPA in the quarter previous to the athlete's season of participation. The school requires that students not have more than two-failing grades each week during their sport's athletic season. In neither instance—the limited number of students involved in the National Honor Society or the low-level academic requirement for athletic participation—would seem to significantly impact the whole of the school's extracurricular-academic dynamic. Accordingly, the peer relationships and social capital obtained in group participation may have good influences outweighing those normally associated with the rank and file high school

extracurricular motives (e.g., physical fitness, padding the college application, alternatives to going home immediately after school).

*“... I-love-God stuff...”—Various Faiths and Faith Levels—Theme 3*

The groups discussed at length the relationship between religious participation and academics, the high opinions of the school’s religiosity for non-Catholics, and the lower religious attendance by students who had attended Catholic school longer. Possibly related to the self-discipline and the structures provided by extracurricular activities, some students believed activities at church might have a similar effect. Dave explained: “Maybe the discipline to go to church on Sundays would help you with overall discipline in life.” Daisy asserted:

Concerning religion, if you’re not part of something outside of school you probably don’t focus as well as someone who is. Because if you just go home and watch TV, listen to music, or something you’re not focusing your time on something. Your brain has a stop point. But if you are active in school and outside of school, you’re constantly thinking.

The focus group participants seemed to place a great deal of importance on school and civic involvement. While not necessarily connected by the students, the encouragement of the school to be involved in extracurriculars and the requirement to perform 110 hours of community service during their high school years might have had some impact on this perception.

Some students believed that the Catholic students, who had attended Catholic schools most of their life, found Central to be less “Catholic” than their former Catholic elementary schools. Accordingly, Dave offered this possible explanation for the differences between the religiosity perspectives of the Catholics and non-Catholics: “So with all the students who aren’t Catholic, maybe the Catholic kids who attended Catholic elementary, for them, they don’t feel like it’s a Catholic school.” Pete states: “If you come from some of the local parishes and then come to Central and you are comparing Catholic parish [schools] to Catholic high school, it is watered down.” Jordan agrees and states, “Comparing it from one school to another, honestly, Central comes nowhere close to what St. Rose<sup>58</sup> was.” Pete thinks that students who are new to a religious school will rate the religiosity of their new school higher because it is their first experience or first encounter. He states, “If I were a Black kid [the majority of whom are from faiths other than Catholic], who came from public schools and I came to Central, he would definitely rate the spiritual nature of this school higher than when he would have gone to another type of school.” Presumably, the Catholic students of the focus group would think that the lower levels of church attendance would be part of the school’s “watered-down” Catholicity.<sup>59</sup> Pete remarks that some students have called Central a “Catholic public school.” Students who voiced these opinions, however, were not able to articulate what would constitute a less “watered-down” environment or

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<sup>58</sup> The parish of St. Rose of Lima on the far Westside of Cleveland was historically a very “conservative” parish led by a very conservative priest. This conservatism was marked by many traditional religious practices that had fallen out of use in most elementary Catholic schools (e.g., boy-bishop election and May altars lead by the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia in “full habit” from Nashville, Tennessee). St. Rose’s parish school closed in 2003.

<sup>59</sup> Studies in adolescent religiosity among Catholic students, however, find a natural ebb and flow based on their life cycle, in which the adolescent years represent a time of ebb from church attendance.

make it more “Catholic.” There seemed to be an undercurrent that a mere increase in percentage of Catholic students would constitute a higher overall Catholic culture, devotion, and practice.<sup>60</sup>

Dave thought that people without previous religious training might also feel less comfortable in a religious school. He states:

If you’re thinking about overall community and community centeredness, so many of these kids haven’t had that experience. Some may be uncomfortable with the “I-love-God stuff” and they may feel different in the school. Maybe if they are more comfortable with [“the I-love-God stuff”/religious nature of the school] then they feel more comfortable in class and in learning.

When asked if any non-Catholic students in the focus groups had ever felt uncomfortable or out of place, the students resoundingly said, “No.” Omar added quickly, “Not at all. If anything I enjoyed the ideas of it all and learned some things because of it.” Mike stated, “I’ve always been in Catholic school for most of my life, so I’m like used to it already.” Daisy concurred, “I’ve been in Catholic school since pre-school and—even though I’m not Catholic—I feel involved in it. And so I never felt different.”

The students wanted to offer an explanation of why there seemed to be a negative relationship between religious variables and the science Ohio Graduation Tests. Pete stated, “It’s interesting about religion and science when sometimes they can contradict each other.” Mike stated: “Sometimes the stuff in the Bible contradicts

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<sup>60</sup> This notion is also found in Donlevy (2007) and Kellmeyer (2005).

science.” While this religious-scientific dichotomy is a common assumption by many including these students, the differences between such factors as evolution and Catholic teaching are historical and are not presently at issue in Catholic schools. This seems to have escaped some of these students in their high school science classes.

There seemed to be an attitude—only among the Catholic, Westside White students—of a hierarchy of Catholic schools, whereby they rated some of the other Catholic schools higher and more desirable. Accordingly, the discussion of their alma mater often contained a hint of embarrassment or regret. There seemed to be a longing for a prestige factor, which has also emerged in Catholic school literature (e.g., Baker & Riordan, 1998; Uecker, 2009). Often this hierarchy emerged in the students’ discourses concerning school differences based on the amount of school tuition, comprehensive versus college-preparatory nature, name recognition in their colleges, and selectivity of the entrance process.<sup>61</sup> The non-Catholic and Hispanic students, however, voiced no such feelings of institutional differentiation. Moreover, all the non-Catholic students felt at home in a school whose religious tradition was not their own.

*“It seems to be the individual”—Differences in Parental Wealth, Education, and Academic Push—Theme 4*

The students in the focus groups were generally surprised by the family differences within their school population, especially regarding wealth and education. Specifically, they were surprised by the range of student family wealth and the amount

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<sup>61</sup> While this hierarchy/prestige element did reoccur, I did not present it as its own theme, since its seeming importance was only within one segment of the focus-group participants: White, Catholic males. It did, however, surface within several themes.

of education of the minority families. Toni, who is African American, opines in terms of generalities about her experience and views of the importance of education in the Black household:

I think it [educational achievement] has something to do with the home life, because—I know lots of African Americans, and I know that school is not stressed in their households. It's like if you get up and go to school, or if you don't, I don't care. I think a lot of parents aren't stressing to their kids that they need to go to school and that they need to excel so that they can succeed in life.<sup>62</sup> And in White homes, they are telling their kids that they need to get a degree, you need to go to school in order to have a good life. A lot parents just don't stress that. There are White homes that might not stress that so much, [but] it's less in black homes. And look at the graduation of Black men, or single-parent homes. The issue for Black kids is to make money, and in Black households, they don't look at school as beneficial to making money.

Accordingly, the participants were surprised by the amount of education possessed by the African American and, to a lesser degree, Hispanic parents. Casey stated, "I'm kind of surprised that the African American parents have the highest educational levels."

Pete commented: "I know it's Cleveland [meaning the city], but I would have thought that more White mothers and fathers would have gone to college." An element of the hierarchy of Catholic schools was again present, in Dave's remarks:

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<sup>62</sup> This perception—if not experience—of the differences in the importance of education between White and Black households is most interesting, as the actual amount of education of the parents in this study is, again, the exact opposite.

If you went to a school like Padua or NDCL [located in a near and distant suburb, respectively], anything like those schools, I'm sure these numbers would be a lot different—I mean [the White parents education would be] a lot higher. I guess this makes sense, since we are talking about Cleveland [His meaning is unclear: Cleveland as the city or Cleveland Central Catholic], and we're working class.

When Pete saw that the highest income in the school was that of two students whose families made \$160,000 per year, he was also quite surprised. He remarked again with this air of a Catholic school hierarchy:

It's hard to see [a family with] \$160,000—why would you, not trying to say anything about Central Catholic as a school—it's a good school, but for a student with that much money, he could go to a different school. *I don't want to say better, but again I kind of want to* [my emphasis]. I don't know.

Dave summarizes the perception accordingly: "Some of these ideas are drilled into you: the idea that Cleveland Central Catholic is a bad school, because, you know, it's cheap. A lot of low income people come here." Speaking more generally, however, Toni, summarizes the study's findings as follows: "That is really interesting that income didn't make any difference. It seems to be the individual."

The members of the focus groups discussed differences in orientations, or loci, of academic press based on ethnoracial groups. Generally and while there was some overlap, Hispanic participants talked at length about family academic push; African American participants discussed the ideas of education in more abstract terms (e.g., to



get ahead, good life); and White participants discussed school more often in terms of tuition dollars and investment. Additionally, the African American students discussed the importance of the individual more often. The individual herself seemed to be more instrumental.

Alberto recounts the importance of family, the role models of his parents, and the tensions related to second language learning in his educational development:

Family role and the education of parents make a difference, because they don't stress education if they don't have it. For parents who have more education, [they] think that their kids should have more education too. I saw my dad going to college and work while I was growing up, so that showed me that my dad thought it was important. I also grew up with my dad reading books. My mom, she raised me reading and speaking Spanish before I started reading and speaking English. But as I started going to English school I started to lose the fluency of my Spanish.

Dave presents a more economic theme which found its locus in his father as the principal breadwinner:

The parents are paying. Obviously the public school teachers are getting paid too. But the parents are paying tuition. That's the biggest difference, beside the academic success. Parents are at home paying however much money for the student to go to this school. When you pay taxes you don't really think that you're paying for schools because it's with all the public services. If you are going to a private school, you know what you are paying for. You're sending

money to that school so that your kid can get a really good education. I think that has an effect on the private school teachers. When I brought home a bad grade, I felt like crap because my parents ... If my dad told me you have to bring this up, or there was an "or-else." Or this is going to happen. I had the fear of God struck into me.

Pete echoed those feelings:

That's how my dad was, if my Dad told me to do something, I better bring it up, because he rarely got involved. It was usually my mom, but if my dad said something, you bet that grade was going up next semester.

Pete continues:

Maybe because you are paying tuition, they know that there is somebody at home that is obviously caring for your education. They want to you succeed, because they know that the parents are paying so much money for them to teach the kid. So they have to do it. They feel more obligated.

Accordingly, there was an academic press based on the financial expenditures of the family. The mother tended to be the voice of encouragement while a father's voice was one of enforcement.

Concerning the makeup of families of students who attend Cleveland Central Catholic, students were surprised that there was no effect on academic achievement.

Dave, who is studying elementary education, summarizes his dismay at the findings:

This is interesting, because of my education classes, we studied the important of the two-parent family. And to read this really contradicts it. I never really

thought about it as being that big of a deal, but I was never in that situation and had no experience. Length of Catholic education makes sense because of me. If you want to do well in school, you can do well in school no matter what. But family income, I thought that would make a bigger difference—I'm not going to lie—from what I've experienced. We're not anywhere up there with the rich families. But, I definitely think if you have somewhere to sleep at night, food in your stomach, you're going to do better. Somewhere to go, to call home—some of these kids [meaning his classmates at Central] have problems with that. I thought that would be a bigger impact on achievement levels.

The notion of the importance of the traditional family as integral to school success does not appear to be substantiated in this study, but the focus groups are at a loss to explain why.

While there were the above differences there was also an element of the importance of the domain of the mother in education in all three groups. Bob tells of the importance of his mother in his vocabulary development: "My mother, she influenced this way. She used a bunch of words that I had no idea what they meant. It kind of prompted me to look them up." Dave thought that the role of the mother was an important reason for the higher levels of achievement among the girls: "... [F]or some, their mothers were really involved in their lives, pushing and pushing them. They all really wanted to learn." Jordan, however, expressed the mother role as more generally important. He told the group:

My mother pushed us in our family, and knowing each of your mothers, they would push you both too. They all pushed us to do better. You get a “B”; you can get an “A”. You get a “C”; you better definitely bring it up to a “B”. And you don’t want to go below a “C”.

While there were definitely recurring themes oscillating between individualism and family motivations within the discourses of the focus groups, Memo summarized the active end-product in the students as follows: “It seems to be the individual motivation. It’s how far they want to take themselves in life.” Accordingly, many students in the focus groups believed that the individual formed by her family, society, and culture as the active agents.

*“To get them ready for the world that they will go out into”—The Urban Catholic Education as an Egalitarian Training Ground for Life—Theme 5*

The focus groups’ participants generally believed that their education, especially at Cleveland Central Catholic, had been within an integrated eclectic combination of students, and that this process had served as a great equalizer of opportunity. Their experience served to teach them that all students were different but also all the same in the process of education and learning, especially recalling that 12% of the school’s population had diagnosed with special learning differences or dis/abilities. According to Omar—and strongly assented to by Casey and Daisy--, Cleveland Central Catholic was “. . . to get us ready for the world that we will go out into.” Alberto asserted:

I think it [success in school] was the way we were raised, and the education that we received. I started going to school with people from diverse backgrounds. I went to Urban Community School, which accepts from a higher class—people who make more money—and some from the lower class people—people who make less money . . . because tuition was adjusted to your income, and the school runs on many donations. And so I grew up—surrounded by African American, White people, Cambodians, by all sorts of different races—I didn't think of race as an issue, because I grew up feeling that these people are just the same as I am. They are just other students who are going to school with me.

Toni tells of her experience and that of her twin sister:

I think that is the same thing with me and my sister, we went to diverse schools [first ring suburb]—except for one school—so we were used to going to school with Caucasians, African Americans, and other races like Hispanics. I think we were just comfortable. And I think some people who are not put in that situation, who just attend an all White school, or all Black school, they're just not comfortable. They just don't know how to deal with it. It [integrated school experience] is so different for them.

This integrated educational environment served not only to make these students feel at ease with people of varied backgrounds and abilities, but, because of their experience of diversity has served—in the words of Alberto—to “. . . broaden your horizons.”

*“I really love Central, and I think a family atmosphere really helps so much.” A Sense of Caring and Family—Theme 6*

The last major theme to emerge from the alumni-focus groups’ discourses was the importance of school as a nexus of support and “family.” This theme had two general divisions: the importance of patterns of friendships within the school and the importance of the teaching staff’s relationships, affection, and caring for the students. These factors were seen to have motivational academic force. Additionally, the students seemed to describe a cyclical pattern that started with school comfort based on caring teachers and adults that created greater engagement in classes (academics) and extracurriculars that created greater community of friends and staff that, in turn, created greater comfort and caring from teachers and adults, etc. Jordan states: “participating in school makes you part of the community.” Dave tells of the importance of this community feeling: “If you don’t have friends here, you might not feel really involved in the community, and you don’t really feel part of the school. I can definitely see that that would make it an uncomfortable place.” And “friends are a sign of the community,” according to Jordan. Pete notices a recurring theme in the discussion and in the research findings: “The importance of friends keeps popping up! You really don’t think about it that much: how much your friends play.” Bob commented on the importance of early friendship patterns in the difference of academic attitudes and achievement between himself and his brother, who was not academically inclined and who did not attend Central Catholic: “Yeah, we went to the same elementary school, but the thing that made the difference is the combination of what my mother told me and the people I

hung around with.” Alberto commented on Bob’s situation and the importance of friendship groups:

If you hang around people who are academically focused and determined and ambitious and you have a mother like Bob, then you will do good. But if you have a mother like Bob’s and be surrounded by friends who are not academically strong or stable or focused or ambitious, then you don’t feel that you need to make good grades. They just don’t care about that—they are focused on other things like playing video games, going to play sports, or just going out and doing whatever.

Hazel exhorted the group to be thankful for the advantages that they had with Cleveland Central Catholic’s environment:

I think we would have all done good, because we all care about academics. I definitely would have excelled. But I really love Central, and I think a family atmosphere really helps so much. I think some people just don’t realize how fortunate we were to be in a setting like this, because I really liked coming to school everyday. It wasn’t like a stress coming to school everyday. Some schools that we [herself and her twin sister] had in the past, it was just terrible. We did not want to go to school. When we went to Euclid Central [first ring suburban middle school], we hated going there and our academics dropped so much, because we hated going there. We dreaded going to school, because it was a terrible school.

The affective role of school attendance and engagement seems paramount from these focus groups.

While emotional tensions at school might be mitigated by one's friendship patterns, the focus groups placed the primary importance of school feeling on the affective relationships between students and teachers and the students' perceptions of teacher caring—as Toni stated, “Teachers play such a huge role in learning.” From the students' discussion, the role seems much less a matter of knowledge or instructional technique than the teachers' interpersonal skills and relationships with their students, though the quality of instruction was appraised higher for Catholic schools by those students who had attended both public and Catholic schools.

While not uniform with all teachers, the focus groups believed their educational experience at Cleveland Central Catholic was marked by teacher relationships and caring. Memo, who was compensating for his diagnosed learning disability and was succeeding at the Cleveland Institute of Art, stated proudly:

The community and family of teachers here really helped me be able to do what I wanted and really pushed me in a good, constructive direction. And that really helped me achieve what I want, and go where I wanted to go. They were really a good influence on the students and helped to grow the community around you.

Alberto commented as follows on the importance of teachers on student motivation:

It's like the teacher and school and the people that's surround you . . . if you know how much you like doing something—even if you like math [and] if you have a math teacher who makes you miserable . . . you will not find yourself



happy. When you're not happy with your situation, you're going to find yourself dropping [other students were agreeing and affirming his comments].

The caring relationships that the alumni had with their teachers at Central Catholic were very strong feelings, but they also had strong feelings about the lack of those relationships that they had with their new college professors.

All the students perceived a significant difference between the caring relationships in high school and their colleges or universities. Some even perceived there to be a lack of caring at their post-secondary institutions. Daisy tells:

This past semester, I had two teachers who really don't care about their students, and then, me and my other friend, we went to talk to the advisor, but they weren't in the office . . . But I've had a couple of teachers—it's like they don't care about the students—and I'm at a H.B.C. And I think my grades aren't what they need to be because of the teachers not caring.

Pete believed that some college professors are "going through the motions." Dave cautioned against college teachers "who just give you information; you have no real relationship with them." Both Jordan and Dave commented about skipping classes where they did not feel a relationship with their college teachers, whereas Jordan remarked that "in high school, I think we all had a pretty good bond with our teachers." Dave shared with the group about a specific class where there was an absence of emotional relationship that bore itself out in his lack of physical presence and intellectual engagement. Dave told the group:

I have an example in a classroom of not feeling comfortable, and I missed this class maybe a dozen times. It was bad! It was psychology of women. I'm in a classroom, and I feel that . . . I really don't feel like my opinion would matter if I said something. And if I did say something, it wasn't taken very nicely. I never spoke up in that class. I have, you all know, no fear to speak up in class, but in that class, I sat in the back, slouched down in my chair, took my notes—but usually I missed that class. I didn't feel comfortable. There wasn't a community.

This transition might need to be addressed formally when students leave Central Catholic—that is, when they leave small supportive high schools for universities that are much larger and, arguably, less relational.

The students were quick to add that the caring relationships that they experienced during high school were not merely about a relationship of good feelings. The caring relationships were marked by the expectations of learning, determination, effort, and the commitment of time to accomplish those learning goals. Jordan commented:

I saw a big difference—I went to Catholic school up until my fifth grade, when I went to public school and after that year, I went back to Catholic school. I saw a big difference in the work ethic [sic]. Growing up in Catholic schools, it's "get your work done, get your work done."

The work of the students was enabled by a commitment of extra time from their teachers also, sometimes far outside of the normal school day. Memo reflected, "The teachers here really are like family. They really care about you. They take the time after school if

you need the help to help you out. Or they make time to help.” Casey commented: “Teachers who are more involved with the students’ lives, in and outside the school, I think they, the kids, work with them better and study with them better.” Discipline was part of this caring. The students joked that, unlike college where you can miss a class, that at Central they knew they had teachers leave a class and would come “down the hallway looking<sup>63</sup> for you,” according to Dave.

Students believed the teachers genuinely cared for them. Alberto remarked: “Yeah, it is important when your teacher shows an interest in you, because you know that they are not just teaching you, because they are getting paid for it. I really don’t care about you; I’m just doing my job. Here they actually take an actual interest in you, and you feel like they care about you. They make a connection.” Dave commented that teachers had to show their desire to know their students:

You have to show some longing to get to know the students. It just can’t be a boring classroom. There’s going to be no chemistry, no getting to know one another. It just makes it more comfortable if you’re almost at a peer level with the teacher.

Accordingly, the relationship is a teacher-student “connection. I guess there’s a feeling of trust. Teachers, who are more involved with the students, get through to the students more,” according to Casey. Toni summarizes the relationship between students who lack a history of educational press or achievement from home; the community of teachers becomes a surrogate parental (e.g., *in loco parentis*) educational press:

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<sup>63</sup> Consider Luke 15: 3-5.

Teachers have to stress the importance of education more, because they are not getting that at home. A girl in my class [college] said that her parents didn't stress her going to college, but her teachers were so hard on her, her teacher [singular] was just pushing her, she was so excited and enthused by her teacher. I think it is possible that teachers can push us to want to go farther in life, especially if they have personal relationships with their teachers. I think sometimes in high school people might not get that message from teachers, and that's why we have to come back and tell them how it is. People like us can really help them. They see us going to school and they see that we like it, we can come back and talk to them and tell them how it is. Some people are scared to go away. Some people are so attached to their hometown that they don't want to leave. They need to get out there and grow up [emphasized].

Basically, most of the members of the focus groups believed that if a family did not emphasize education, then it was the responsibility of the school and the teachers to do so. This educational emphasis, or press, would be communicated to the students by the amount of personal caring the students received at school and in the classroom and the qualities of relationships that the students had with their teachers. This affective component of Central Catholic is expressed in Pete's "at Central I was happy," Daisy's "I had teachers that cared," and Toni's "I love Central!"

In summary, the six themes from the focus groups, with some minor subthemes, offer the whole of this study clear student voices to clarify, interpret, expand, and speak to the data. In the next chapter, I will attempt to discuss the study's overall findings in

light of the current research literature and these voices from Cleveland Central Catholic High School's alumni.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The primary goal of this study was to investigate preliminary statistical and anecdotal evidence that indicated that students in a small urban multicultural Catholic high school in Cleveland, Ohio had little-to-no racial or ethnic (minority/majority) disparity in the students' perceived personal and academic experience, which I had previously reported (Hollis, 2006). This study specifically targeted the areas of race, gender, parental education, family makeup, family wealth, length of Catholic education, and four-factor composite indicators of school climate. The school climate factors were teacher caring, school religiosity, school community, and student respect. This chapter will present the study's findings from statistical analyses and conclusions and discuss their importance relative to other research, socioeducational theory, and the reactive input from a series of small alumni focus groups.

### *Demographics*

An examination of this school's demographics indicates both expected and unexpected findings when comparing the three ethnoracial groups (i.e., students who identified themselves as White, Black, or Hispanic). Crosstabular analysis found significant differences between the ethnoracial groups in terms of religious membership, parental education, parental makeup, and gross family income. Additionally, the students' participation in school sports, accumulation of negative discipline infractions, and amount of Catholic education were significantly different. Academic indicators found slightly significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) between the groups in terms of group GPA, OGT math scores, and OGT science scores. Of interest, however, were the items and measurements that revealed no differences between the groups of students.

Consistent with national and historical ethnic membership statistics, African Americans were less likely to identify themselves as members of the Catholic faith (see Davis 1990). The White and Hispanic students in a Catholic school were more likely to be Catholic. The phenomenon of students of non-Catholic faith traditions choosing to attend Catholic schools, however, is also well documented in the literature (e.g., Cibulka, et al., 1982; Grant, 1988; Greeley, 1982/2002). In historical immigrant Catholic neighborhoods (e.g., Cleveland's Slavic Village), Catholic educational institutions have undergone a transformation as many of the former immigrant families have moved to suburban areas. Presently, the central city and its accompanying "pauperization" (Anyon, 1997) have caused many Catholic educational institutions to undergo a shift in their educational missions. The historically religion-based instruction mission has been

changed to a mission of social justice and the promotion of human dignity (see Oldenski, 1997). This is true of Cleveland Central Catholic. Accordingly, Catholic schools now serve to educate students, many of whom lack the ability to secure sound and safe education in the broader public institutions.<sup>64</sup> Current financial difficulties and the ensuing requirements to pass on cost in the form of tuition increases, however, are challenging that presence. While measures (e.g., Cleveland and other cities' voucher programs) have served as stop-gaps for educational opportunity, they have not stemmed the tide of a growing payer educational system for those who cannot pay. This financial burden has caused some in the Catholic ecclesial<sup>65</sup> and educational hierarchy to reconsider these social commitments in the areas of the inner-city (see Donlevy, 2007; Orsi, 2002). Though many urban Catholic schools have a majority of their students from non-Catholic traditions, these schools still remain Catholic. These students have a social justice right to quality education, especially where there is little opportunity within their neighborhoods. This right is based in the same human rights that the Catholic Church has historically operated hospitals, orphanages, social service agencies, etc. To paraphrase the previous Bishop of Cleveland, Anthony Pilla, the schools are Catholic, not because the students are Catholic but because the mission is Catholic.

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<sup>64</sup> The general state of Cleveland's public schools is fraught with both educational and safety issues. Stephen Loomis, President of the Cleveland Police Patrolmen's Association, recently stated the following about the Cleveland Municipal School System: "The elementary schools might be okay, but the high schools are absolutely unacceptable. I have police officers get hurt every single day that are working in the high schools here in Cleveland. Nobody wants to talk about it, but that is the reality. The school system is just atrocious. We have police officers fighting every single day" (2009, n.p.).

<sup>65</sup> Leonard Blair, Bishop of the Diocese of Toledo, Ohio, has stated that "Catholic schools are for Catholics" (personal communication with Marie Arter, Assistant Principal of Toledo Central Catholic High School, March 25, 2009).



The demographic data from Cleveland Central Catholic offers interesting contradictions. Parental education and earnings were inconsistent. While there is normally a positive relationship between education and earning potential, this was not so among this school's parents. While White and Hispanic parents reported average incomes of \$45,824 and 42,588, respectively, the parents of Black students reported an average of only \$39,688. African American parents, however, had the highest levels of post-secondary education/training (44% for mothers and 40% for fathers). Hispanic parents had slightly less post-secondary training (40% for mothers and 35% for fathers), while White parents (23% for mothers and 22% for fathers), however, were significantly lower than both minority groups. Also related to income is the demographic of family-household makeup. White and Hispanics were both more likely to live in two-parent families (two-parent houses were 60% for Whites and Hispanics students and 34% for Black<sup>66</sup> students). The increase of one-parent households across the American population, especially in the central city, is well documented in general and specifically for the African American urban community (e.g., Ferrell, 2009). At face value, this appears to be remarkable, because less-educated groups were generating more income. The family makeup, however, might explain this financial difference—that is, income rates for two-parent households might naturally be higher than for one-parent households, because there are more adults who could have jobs. I cannot, however,

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<sup>66</sup> The African American parents in this school are inconsistent with some research predicting higher levels education producing two-parent households. Theory is not helpful to explain this situation. Would higher education indicate a greater tendency toward traditional two-parent families? Or, would higher levels of education assist in a parent living independent without the requirements of a second? The latter seems less plausible since the income levels are lower. Nevertheless, this phenomenon is extraneous to the major research questions of educational disparity of this study, yet it bears mentioning.

state this conclusively. What is important, however, is that these African American students and their families spend a much greater percentage of their family income on educational expenditures.<sup>67</sup> The standard tuition rate of \$5,800 represented a greater expense commitment for those who had less income. This parental commitment to education might be explained by their high levels of education. Family resource theory (e.g., Kagan, 1977; Ferrrell, 2009), however, would make much of the limited wealth and only one parent residing with the child. Limited family resources, such as the single-parent household and lower wealth, would indicate greater difficulties in obtaining academic achievement based on less adult interactions and lower wealth. This particular financially-based academic risk seems to be mitigated at this school. Based on their levels of education, however, African American educational expectations of the household's children might also be higher. This appears to be an important topic for further investigation.

This difference in parental education levels among the ethnoracial groups could be argued as a significantly confounding variable to any conclusion about the achievement gap in this study. The importance of education is also a significant portion of the reproduction theory, whereby higher family education levels raise student achievement and the lack of family education hampers academic achievement. Accordingly, this parental education difference in this study could be acting as an equalizer between White and Black students, effectively masking an otherwise achievement gap. I cannot, however, make an exact assertion according to this

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<sup>67</sup> This is true even for those who receive the state voucher, which is only \$3105 or \$2750 (depending on the family income) of the total tuition cost of \$5800.

hypothesis. Nevertheless, it is a possible limitation and an element that should be investigated in later research.

At Cleveland Central Catholic, there were also differences between amount of Catholic education, participation in sports, and accumulation of behavior infractions between the three ethnoracial groups. Black and Hispanic students had significantly less Catholic education, 63% and 67%, respectively, while White students had an average of 81% of Catholic education. While the White and Hispanic students were of similar Catholic backgrounds, these findings are consistent with the historic underrepresentation of Hispanics in Catholic education (Beneson, 1986; Convey, 1992; Guerra, 2005; O'Keefe & Murphy, 2000). The African American overrepresentation in sports may be an indicator of personal choice of the school and reasons for attending Cleveland Central Catholic, or possibly due to "cultural taste" (see Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). The school has recently become somewhat noted for divisional basketball. In the year of the study, the girls' basketball team won the Division III State Championship followed by the boys' basketball team winning the state championship in 2008-2009. While always being cautious of overgeneralization, there exists a proclivity for some ethnoracial groups toward specific sports and activities, e.g., Poles toward soccer and Puerto Ricans and Cubans toward baseball. Hale-Benson bespeaks the importance of athletics in the African American community, especially males. She states: "Competitive sports are very important in the Afro-American culture. Competency in sports is a manhood rite and is very important to one's status in the peer group" (Hale-Benson, 1982, p. 65). Consequently, this athletic importance and the financial windfall of

professional sports have merged into a mythic view that the financial rewards of sports are readily available and totally life altering. One such arena is in the area of professional basketball (see McCloskey, 2008). Eitzen (2006) describes the phenomenon as follows:

Sports appear to be an important avenue out of poverty for African Americans. The major professional sports are dominated numerically by African Americans. Although they constitute only 12 percent [sic] of the population, African Americans make up about 75 percent of the players in professional basketball, about 67 percent in professional football, and 10 percent of professional baseball (Latinos account for about 26 percent of professional baseball players, and Asians about 1 percent). . . . Moreover, African Americans dominate the list of the highest moneymakers in sports. . . . Although African Americans dominate professional basketball, football, and, to a lesser extent, baseball, they are rarely found in other sports, such as hockey, automobile racing, tennis, golf, bowling, and skiing (p. 179).

While such discussion can be accused of sounding, if not being, racist, these ideas have sparked major debate within the African American community (e.g., Dyson, 1997, 2005).

As an educator in the city of Cleveland<sup>68</sup> and especially in the LeBron-James era, I would assert that there is a general perception by many, many urban and urban African

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<sup>68</sup> At a recent visitation for eighth-graders from a neighboring inner-city Catholic elementary school to Cleveland Central Catholic High School, I presented two sessions on future academics and the importance of language study in college preparation and career choices. As an ice-breaker, I asked them to introduce themselves and their career plans. Of the 55 boys and girls in attendance, 40 students had as their career plans to be a professional athlete, mainly basketball. When I pushed, many were able to give a backup plan, e.g., pediatrician, surgeon, archeologist, lawyer.

American students that sports are a cure-all. McCloskey (2008) recounts an anecdote told to him by Orlando G. Gober, the former principal of Harlem's Rice High School:

On the way home from summer school in July, Orlando was walking through Jackie Robinson Park in Harlem. A small boy bounced a basketball while his mother was talking with friends. The boy dropped the ball and let it roll. One of the women on the bench picked the ball up and gave it to the boy's mother. The child ran over to his mother and knocked the ball out [of] her hands. It rolled away and another woman chased it. The vignette repeated several times until the mother held the ball higher than the boy could reach. "Gimme, Gimme," the boy yelled, then started to cry. "How old is he?" Orlando asked the mother. "Three," she replied. "Why don't you give him a book to put in his hand instead of a basketball?" "What are you talking about? He can't read." "Yes, you're right," Orlando agreed. "But he can't play basketball either." "Oh," the mother nodded (p. 61).

Personally, I cannot count the times when registering an incoming ninth-grader for high school classes and their responses to the question, "What do you want to do after high school? The answers are replete with the dream of professional sports, especially among the African American males. This perception among African American youth and/or peer groups seems to be reinforced by the significant differences in sports participation at Cleveland Central Catholic. Moreover, the athletic program includes only those sports popular in the city. Sports such as ice hockey, field hockey, rugby, or lacrosse have never been part of Cleveland Central Catholic's extracurriculars. A short-lived

soccer team ended about 12-years ago for lack of student participation, which coincided with a decrease in first-generation Eastern European immigration to the Slavic Village area.

Lastly, there was a significant difference in the number of behavioral infraction points obtained among the three groups. There was mild significance ( $p < .05$ ) between the average number of infraction points obtained by White and Hispanic students (5.75 and 5.15, respectively, and the average obtained by African American students 9.45. The literature is replete with instances of an overrepresentation of African American boys in disciplinary actions in America's schools (see Children's Defense Fund, 1975; Ferguson, 2001; Gregory & Mosely, 2004; Gregory, Nygreen, & Moral, 2006). Similar to the achievement gap, this discipline gap asserts that a subset of students—especially those who have been historically marginalized—are far more likely to receive harsher discipline in school than their White classmates (Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2009). To investigate this so-called discipline gap, I examined the differences between the Blacks students based on gender. While males in all three ethnoracial groups obtained higher disciplinary averages than did their female classmates, only the African American students' differences are important in the discipline gap theory. Accordingly, African American girls have a mean number of infractions of 7.49 ( $SD = 7.36$ )—below the school average of 7.92 ( $SD = 8.85$ )—, but African American males had an average of 11.82 ( $SD = 10.26$ ). These data support the finding that there exists a discipline gap at Cleveland Central Catholic. The importance of these rudimentary findings at Cleveland

Central Catholic will be discussed later, accompanying the comments and insights of the focus groups concerning Research Question #4.

### *Academic Indicators*

The six academic indicators revealed both equity and differences between the ethnoracial groups. On the OGT Reading, OGT Writing, or OGT Social Studies, there were no significant differences (ANOVA) measured between the student groupings in the areas of (see Table 6 again). In fact, average raw scores reveal that Hispanic students outperformed both White and Black students on the reading test. Accordingly, these three academic indicators reveal no achievement gap between the students.

The remaining three academic indicators (GPA, OGT Math, and OGT Science) revealed only low-level significant difference between the groups according to a Univariate ANOVA analysis ( $p < .05$ ). This difference, however, is not in keeping with the achievement gap, whereby it is theorized that White students would significantly outperform (two years according to most research) the minority-status Black and Hispanic students. To the contrary, on an average Hispanic students out performed White and Black students on two-of-the-three indicators.

1. **GPA.** Concerning the students' cumulative GPAs, Hispanic students ( $M = 2.68$ ) significantly outperformed Black students ( $M = 2.42$ ) with White students ( $M = 2.58$ ) resting insignificantly between the two groups. There is no achievement gap between minority and majority students.

2. **OGT Science.** Likewise, Hispanic students ( $M = 408$ ) outperformed the White students ( $M = 407$ ) by one-point on the OGT Science Tests. Both the Hispanic and White students groups were slightly significantly higher ( $p < .03$ ) than the African American students ( $M = 399$ ). There is no achievement gap between minority and majority students.
3. **OGT Math.** The OGT Math test is the only test to reveal a statistical difference between White and Black students, though the difference was only slight ( $p < .02$ ). What is more important, however, is that no gap emerged regarding the Hispanic students. The average score for White students was 413, with the Hispanic students averaging 411, and the Black students 406. While less emphatic, again there is no achievement gap observed between minority and majority students.

In summary, only one indicator of slight significance could indicate that there exists a gap between White and Black students in the area of Math. White students do not score significantly higher than do Hispanic students. What is remarkable is that any slight differences between White and Black students can only be found in the area of Math ( $p < .02$ ) and Science ( $p < .03$ ). Moreover, there is no significant difference between the White students and the Hispanic minority group on any academic indicator. To the contrary and in opposition to the achievement gap's notion of minority disadvantage, Hispanic students surpass White students in the areas of GPA, Reading OGTs, and Science OGTs.



Simple comparisons of these academic indicators fail to make any definitive finding on the presence of an achievement gap at Cleveland Central Catholic. The lack of superior test scores by the White students over Black and, especially, Hispanic students would do much to challenge the assumption of the achievement gap's inevitability in American education. Moreover, while GPA and OGT differences occur in small degree in the OGT math test, it is inconsequential when compared to the two-to-four academic years of difference between White and minority students that commonly appears in the literature (Ferguson, 1998a, 1998b; Guzmán Cordero, 1997; Jencks & Philips, 1998; Lareau, 2003; Noguera, 2008; Noguera & Wing, 2006; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997, 2003). Accordingly, I find that these data would not support the presence of an achievement gap between White and minority students. More importantly, however, are the findings from the regression analyses and the other variables that may or may not predict higher levels of academic success on these academic indices.

### ***Research Question 1:***

#### ***What are the dimensions of school climate within this school?***

Overall, the school climate instrument was found to have good internal consistency estimates (Cronbach's alphas all above .80) and well-defined factor structures as shown in the confirmatory factor analysis (again see Table 8). Accordingly, these present analyses appear to further confirm the internal validity and reliability of the instrument from Hollis (1994, 2006) by obtaining higher Cronbach's alphas around

fewer factor structures. Accordingly, these factor structures formed a composite indicator of school climate based on student responses loaded around the following four groups: feelings of teacher caring, feelings of school community, feelings of school religiosity, and feelings of respect.

The school climate factor analysis's division of religious knowledge and community is consistent with previous theories of religion—that is, the difference between the areas of affective community and the areas of more cognitive doctrine and practice. Accordingly, the two factors loaded as school community and school religiosity. Glock's (1959) fundamental work lists four areas of religiosity. He distinguishes religious beliefs (as the core category) from religious works (morals), practices (ritual), and feelings (emotions). Weigert and Thomas (1970) posited the following categories: belief, experience, knowledge, and practices. Mueller's synthesis (1980) offers the following groups of religion's components: community (communion), doctrine (creed and beliefs), ethics (works and code of conduct), rites (ritual, practices, and cult), knowledge (intellectual and cognitive), and emotion (affect, devotions, and feelings). Accordingly, these limited two variables of school community and school religiosity have very limited power to ascertain the overall student body's religiosity. The factors of respect and teacher caring, however, speak more generally to the school climate literature (see Anderson, 1982; Freiberg, 1999; Griffith, 1999; Hoy, 1990).

Again, these four factors are very consistent with the majority of research in school climate (ethos, tone, atmosphere, feeling, morale, etc.), whereby perceptions of respect, community, caring, affection, and trust have figured as highly important (e.g.,

Tagiuri, 1988; Anderson, 1982; Schein, 1985). Moreover, it is the basis for my theoretical construct of the unique climate and organizational culture of the Catholic school, the elements of doctrine and religiosity values also coalesced. While not proven definitively from this study, the religious component of organizational culture and its impact on a wider ecology, organization, and milieu is supported. Moreover, the moderately significant positive correlations between the four factors would indicate some relationship without multicollinearity. Accordingly, and as can be identified in the perceptions of the student body, the role of religious culture, as identified in their notions of the school's religiosity, has an impact on the general school culture. As previously discussed, I believe that that culture is lived, communicated, and transferred in the school's shared (positive or negative) religious cognitive assumptions, values, behavioral norms, beliefs, ways of thinking, artifacts, traditions and rituals, history, stories, myths, heroes and heroines (see Figure 5). At present, this religious cultural factor can only be viewed as one of four important factors in the composite of school culture. It is only within my hypothetical model can I theorize that this religious factor actually figures as the core factor around which the others orbit. Elements of this religious foundation are found in the work of Coleman and Hoffer (1987) and Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993), but it remains only a theoretical construct. The importance of organizational culture to all institutions is well accepted (e.g., Schein, 1985), but empirical validation is quite limited.

### *Research Question 2:*

*What are the demographic and climate factors that correlate with school academic achievement?*

There are many significantly strong relationships between the variables within this study. Important variables that produced relationships with the academic indicators are: percentages of friends in high school, regularity of student worship, the number of discipline infraction points, percentage of Catholic education, and school climate factors.

Not surprisingly, interpersonal variables related to peers and peer types had a relationship with student academic performance. The number of high-school-graduation-minded friends positively related to all indications of academic success, as did family high school graduation rates and feelings of respect in the school. The importance of peer relations is replete in the literature (e.g., Chen, 1997; Messner, 2008; Steward, 2008). The community of the students who share the high school experience and academic value is supported by these data. It seems likely that friends performing like tasks would support the accomplishment of those tasks—that is, the more persons in a student's peer group positively undergoing high school education, the more the student would be apt to positively engage in that activity. There seems to be an implicit group dynamic which might offer a low-level academic press.

The relationships between the percent-of-Catholic-education variable and other demographic variables are also noteworthy. There were consistent positive correlations between higher GPA and all-five-OGT subject scores and those students who had higher

percents of Catholic-school education. The notion of a Catholic school effect would appear to be supported. Moreover, as the variable of percentage of Catholic education was a value-added construct across all students enrolled in this Catholic school, it would appear less likely to be influenced by selection bias. Regardless of all other factors that might separate these students from the general population, at this moment-in-time and in this school of choice the Catholic-education effect might be set apart by this variable of amount of Catholic-school experience. The school setting is a constant and the educational experience itself might be more readily isolated and examined. While selection bias questions can never fully be satisfied, these measures of within-Catholic-School differences must, at least, add some insight. This value-added approach to viewing the increasing levels of experience (and perhaps performance) is a unique improvement over prior research. It is important to note that Sander (2001) asserts that a value-added model of research can “reduce bias” (p. 56).

From a religious education or formation point of view, a troubling finding is that the percentage of Catholic education has a slightly negative relationship with church attendance ( $r = -.15, p < .01$ ). This finding, however, appears to be possibly consistent with faith-development research. The high school years and adolescence have long been noted as a time when youths undergo personal individuation (separation) from their parents (e.g., Erikson, 1968; Baumeister, 1999). This happens in the areas of parental religious beliefs too. In his work on the stages of faith, Fowler (1981/1995; 2004) speaks of a naturally formative period of adolescent questioning and doubt that is integral to a personal belief system, as opposed to mythic systems that are accepted without critical

examination. Thomas Zanzig, popular author of a religious series from St. Mary's Press, changed the title of his 9<sup>th</sup> grade primer from *Understanding Your Catholic Faith* to *Understanding Catholic Christianity* to reflect this period of the high school years (personal conversation, June 22, 1988). Zanzig believed that this paradigm shift of objectifying the religious content during adolescence was important to "searching individuals," who could more readily examine, evaluate, and accept it for themselves. This religious educational shift upholds the dignity of the individual more and does not simply seek to indoctrinate. A time of questioning and doubt, if not a time of rumspringa, is integral to mature faith formation.<sup>69</sup>

Burton and Francis (1996) find that family religious attendance is not strongly associated with Catholics sending their children to Catholic school. The families may have parents that are termed "lapsed Catholics"—that is, individuals who still self-identify as Catholic but without any formalized membership in a specific parish or regular church attendance. This lapsed<sup>70</sup> Catholics phenomenon does not strictly negate their overall personal religious belief system. Many of these lapsed Catholics still seek to celebrate major rites of passages within the context of the church. Burton and Francis found that 64% of lapsed Catholics sent their children to Catholic schools. Attendance in

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<sup>69</sup> Despite this time of religious questioning, two participants of this study seemed very fervent in their beliefs. After graduation, one entered an Evangelical Baptist seminary in Tennessee (Class of 2009) while another entered a Benedictine monastery in Alabama (Class of 2007). Even perhaps more interesting, the latter student participated in special education classes.

<sup>70</sup> This type of term is common within Catholicism (along with others such as "non-practicing Catholic" to the more negative "fallen-away"), where church law requires not only intellectual and moral assent but requires weekly participation in the religious life of a local church. These terms are very common in American Catholicism. Accordingly, terms like these are used to differentiate levels of activity that differ from ideal participation. Catholic full membership, however, begins with the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation). Only public statements of dissent, official excommunication, or membership in another faith severs full membership (*The Code of Canon Law*, Canons 204, 205, 316), hence these type of terms are used.

such schools seems to contribute to "socialization"<sup>71</sup> within the Catholic tradition" (p. 378), perhaps, something the parents do not appear able to do themselves. The process appears to have success. Greeley and Rossi (1966) and Greeley (1977; 2002), however, observed a return to church attendance and parish participation later in adulthood. After the adolescent boomerang-return to church attendance and participation, it is reported that those who have attended Catholic schools<sup>72</sup> hold more socially progressive political positions and offer greater financial support to their parishes (Greeley, 1977). It is most interesting that a religious school can take on traits of a religious surrogate for parents, even when there is the natural questioning time during high school. It would seem that this separation and individuation from their family's faith might be more common than one would think, though not commonly discussed, since most of the research of the adult religious ties of the Catholic school effect is measured after students have left high school and, in fact, returned to church participation and attendance. The process of faith formation during the high school years is in serious need of study.

What then can be made of this correlation between religious education and religious practice within the Catholic school? It seems plausible that the great amount of religious education, and perhaps sophistication, may leave these students with greater rationalizing powers to pick and choose religious components and segments during this time of individuation—leaving liturgical attendance by the wayside. As is sometimes

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<sup>71</sup> This, in part, may explain the phenomenon of individuals who are "cultural Catholics," especially where Catholicism is not only doctrinal faith but a component in a broader national and social identity. Greeley (1990), Hoge (2002), and Demerath (2000) offer interesting scholarly cross-cultural treatments of the religious culture across religious denominations.

<sup>72</sup> I believe that it is important to note that very few of these studies differentiate Catholic education by degree—that is, students are considered products of Catholic education by virtue of graduation regardless of the number of years they were in attendance.

reported by Catholic high schoolers, the participation in the common religious elements of the Catholic school—with its prayer services, liturgies, and religious classes, etc.—offers the adolescent a type of tradeoff, or replacement, for the more traditional Sunday attendance. This has long been a complaint for some pastors who find it hard to replicate the sometimes dynamic high school liturgies on Sunday morning.

Of greater interest and difficulty is the negative relationship between the religiosity factor and academic achievement. The school climate's school religiosity factor correlated negatively with all five areas of the Ohio Graduation Test, but—and not surprisingly—it correlated positively with church attendance. Why would the topics of the 12-items school religiosity factor negatively correlate with the standardized test for general mastery? The topics of Christian values, service, theology (religion) classes, spiritual life, and importance of religious activities (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .899$ ) should have had little relationship with academic achievement. It is interesting to note that no such correlation was found between this factor and the more socially-constructed, classroom-based academic achievement indicator of GPA. Could this absence of personal feeling or social context in the high-stakes testing situation create testing or academic tension within these students that they do not encounter in the classroom? Could those students, who are more sensitive to religious elements, be more predisposed to social environments that religion is associated *prima facie*? Could students with higher academics desire a more homogeneous religious or philosophical, if not conservative, presentation of the school's religiosity and religious life? At this time, the inversion between religious school climate and academic achievement



proposes an unresolved conundrum, but I will treat the topic later with possible insights from the focus groups.

*Research Question 3:*

*Does the length of Catholic school experience, school climate measurements, or race impact or predict academic achievement?*

Stepwise regression analyses were performed on each of the measurements of academic achievement: GPA, Science OGT, and Math OGT. For each of the regression analysis low-level significant predictors were found which supported most of the premises of this study (see Table 19). Gender was a predictor in two of the academic areas, while behavioral points, participation in clubs, friends in high school, and measurements of teacher caring and negative school religiosity were common predictors to all three academic areas. Participation in the school sports program was a predictor for only GPA. More importantly, however, the SES predictors of wealth and education commonly found in the literature failed to have any predictive value on these three important indicators of academic achievement. Additionally, race, minority status, traditional two-parent family households, and school attendance records played no predictive values in these academic areas. Additionally, items of religiosity, school community and respect feelings, length of Catholic education, and family educational patterns were not predictive variables to the students' academic scores.

While mindful that the regressions analyses calculated low effect sizes ( $R^2 = .3$ ,  $.15$ , and  $1.8$ ) for each of the models, this study asserts the predictive force of positive

Table 19

*Summary of Stepwise Linear Regression Analyses for Three Academic Achievement Indicators*  
*(Cumulative GPA, Math OGT, & Science OGT)*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>GPA</b>	<b>Math OGT</b>	<b>Science OGT</b>
Demographics Variables			
• Gender	Pred. 2	Pred. 5	
• Specific race/ethnicity			
• Minority/Majority status			
• Traditional 2-parent family makeup			
• Attendance of religious services			
Socioeconomic status variables			
• Family income			
• Mother's post-high school education			
• Father's post-high school education			
General School Variables			
• Discipline points (negative behavior)	Pred. 1	Pred. 6	Pred. 2
• Participation in school sports	Pred. 5		
• Participation in school clubs	Pred. 4	Pred. 2	Pred. 5
• Attendance (absences)			
• Graduation-minded friends	Pred. 3	Pred. 1	Pred. 1
• H.S. family graduates			
Catholic School Variables			
• Percentage of Catholic school education			
• Faith tradition (Catholic or otherwise)			
School climate factored variables			
• Teacher caring factors	Pred. 6	Pred. 4	Pred. 4
• School Religiosity factor	Pred. 7	Pred. 3	Pred. 3
• Community feelings factor			
• Respect factors			
Model's Total Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.297	.150	.176

school/social behavior, extracurricular activity, high school friendship patterns, gender, and teacher caring and lower religiosity school climate factors in the attainment of higher measurements of academic performance, which is highly consistent with the research literature (e.g., Anyon, 2006; Lee, 2005; Lubienski & Lubienski, 2005; Lynch, 2006; Noguera, 2003, 2008; Noguera & Wing, 2006; Phillips & Chin, 2004; Rothstein, 2004). This study, however, directly runs counter to the importance of racial grouping, majority race status, parental education, two-parent family households, wealth, school attendance, and community and respect climate indicators as is found in the literature.

### *The Negative Prediction of School Religiosity Rating*

What could be the reasons for the negative relationships between the school religiosity factor and the academic achievement scores on the OGTs? At first glance, it would seem that those who found the school's religiosity higher would be "more religious." The opposite might also be true—that is, those who ranked the school's religiosity lower were communicating their religious dissonance. For some students, they might be experiencing a difference between a "higher" past religious background and a present "lower" environment at Cleveland Central Catholic, especially where religion is viewed in terms of rite and practices. While the school is unquestionably a Catholic school, the overall religious diversity of the school may account for less "Catholic" pietistic practices, especially for those students who are more accustomed to specific rites and devotions. This could also be a disparity between the practices of an ecumenical school and the faith-life of their families (see Uecker, 2009). This explanation

was found in the focus group. In comparison with more homogeneous Catholic elementary schools, Dave thinks that some Catholic students might believe that “they don’t feel like it’s a Catholic school.” Pete talks about the Catholic religious nature being “watered down,” while Jordan states that Cleveland Central Catholic “comes nowhere close” to his Catholic elementary school in terms of religiosity. Pete expressed the thought that students who transfer from public school to Cleveland Central Catholic would “definitely rate the spiritual nature of this school higher” than where they had gone before. These factors were totally unforeseen in the preparation for this study.

This tension between religious homogeneity and diversity in Catholic education is found in some of the literature (e.g., Donlevy, 2007; Orsi, 2002). Some have argued that extremes in religious diversity (faiths other than Catholic) “change the tone” or have a “deleterious impact” on the Catholic school (see Donlevy, 2007, p. 102). Within Cleveland Central Catholic, however, there is no empirical baseline of religious homogeneity from which to compare. Additionally, I would argue that enrollment and school admissions based merely on faith tradition is religious discrimination and is contrary to the social justice role of Catholic education (see Oldenski, 1997), though some schools do practice it. The religious diversity of Cleveland Central Catholic may, however, be new to some students who have not encountered ecumenical and different faiths due to their previous schooling or family background. While this interpretation is not found explicitly in the statistics, the positive correlations between length of Catholic school attendance and academic achievement might account for this negative correlation

if those previous years of Catholic education were in more homogeneously conservative Catholic elementary schools. This question is ripe for future exploration.<sup>73</sup>

### *Weakness of the Community Measurement*

If “[f]orming a community is the key benchmark of our Catholic school” (Mullaly, 2006, p. 10), then why did the community-school-climate factor not emerge significant in this study? Perhaps the diversity of the school population, with its varied racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, might impact the formation and the cohesiveness of school community. Uecker (2009) and general social learning theory assert the importance of homogeneous groups in the effective building of communities. Adolescents are generally more apt to sort into friendships based on others similar to themselves (*homophilous* relationships). This is not to say that there is no community present within this diverse population within the school’s contextualized purpose, values, philosophy, etc. Rather, it means only that its present level has not proved statistically significant in academic correlation or predictive power. Again, without a baseline from which to view the student community, it is impossible to make serious judgments on the positives or negatives of the present affective bond between students. This questionable state of the community is strengthened by the variability of the respect school climate factor. The student-to-student relationships in the school appear to have little force statistically. It is in the adult-student relationships where the students find

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<sup>73</sup> I will not argue about religious anti-intellectualism among Catholics and other religious peoples or notions that Evangelical and Fundamentalist Christian persons (the majority of the non-Catholic students at Cleveland Central Catholic) might be more authoritarian, close-minded, etc. (see Boykin, 2004; Ellis, 1955; Hunsberger, Pratt, and Pancer, 2002; Meyer & Ouellette, 2009; & Shermer, 2000). Some, however, could assert that religious sensitivity in itself might be a predictor to lower academic achievement, but I would not do so.

the most support and caring. This speaks to the importance of studying the nesting adult environment where the students live their academic lives.

It should be pointed out, however, that the students from the focus group never viewed their peer relationships and peer community negatively. Most of their comments about caring, family,<sup>74</sup> and community, however, were targeted to the school as an abstraction and the adults specifically. Members of the focus groups repeatedly voiced allegiance to the school as an abstract entity: “I love Central.” Moreover, the discussion of community and the importance of social capital may still be largely operative even where community levels on this variable are pronounced. Again, these findings do not mean that community does not exist or that in other venues less community might be operative; it means that on this one instance, on this one instrument, community did not emerge as significant. Moreover, on a philosophical level, perhaps community, like love and happiness, is not that which we quantify and achieve. Rather, it is that for which we work and to which we aspire. It might not be the destination but rather the goal or journey to which one must be faithful. I agree strongly with Uecker (2009), who states that the “whole of the religious-school community is likely greater than the sum of its parts” (p. 354).

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<sup>74</sup> The analogy of “family” for Cleveland Central Catholic High School reoccurs often in the focus groups’ discussion and the general discourse of the school. It might be useful to note that a family dynamic has more of an ebb and flow of positives and negatives than does the general notion of “community,” which can be more utopian, if not Pollyannaish. It might be posited that urban students from their sometimes tempestuous experiences of family (see Anyon, 1997; Kozol, 1991; Kotlowitz, 1991; Sampson, 2004) might make them more realistic as to day-to-day dynamics of the course of interpersonal friction and familial love. This term family, I would venture to say, might be more meaningful and intimate than the more abstract notion of community.

Research might do very well to target the dynamism operating in the adult teaching community, or professional learning community (see Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001; Phillips, 2003). Of special importance would be the spiritual capital of the adults: teachers, administrators, clerks, maintenance staff, cooks, etc. Learning is nested in the social surrounding of the school. Likewise social capital, community understanding, sense of belonging, and spiritual force are nested in their familiar and religious school context. This nesting may be on a theological or philosophical level among the adults, while being understood on an affective relational dynamism by the students—something akin to the discussions of the implicit, or hidden, curricula. Nevertheless, it is within that affective realm of caring and supportive teachers that students learn. This seems to be the case at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.

Accordingly, the overarching question posed at the onset about the mitigating experience of the Catholic school experience to the national achievement gap can be answered, however, imperfectly. If we take for granted that there is in the United States *prima facie* existence of a gap between minority and majority ethnoracial groups, there is in this one Catholic high school a mitigation of the racial academic gap. This gap is, even at times, inverted, where Hispanic students outperform the White majority students. How is the national trend mitigated? Moreover, how are the other national predictors of academic risk, especially for African American students (e.g., higher levels of single-parent family backgrounds, lower wealth, higher discipline points) mitigated. The White students' higher family income, lower parental education, higher level two-parent households, and higher positive school behavior do not cause consistently higher

academic levels. Additionally, despite their relative higher income, more intact two-parent families, and higher parental education, Hispanic<sup>75</sup> students revealed no achievement gap from the White students. At face value these factors would seem to account for greater educational success, but they failed to prove significant in the ANOVA comparisons and, more importantly, the regression analyses. What are the factors that equalize all these students despite variables that should cause them to be at academic risk or ecological attainment? It would appear to be the school itself, which is made up of an adult educational community.

### *The Finding of a Discipline Gap*

The most important positive general outcome of this study is the statistical findings of consistent academic achievement despite race, income, educational, and family-composition differences. Of secondary importance is the more troubling finding of a persistent discipline gap experience by African American males (see Table 20). While not clearly indicating the reasons, the regression analyses found that behavioral infraction points were a very important variable in predicting indicators of academic achievement. This issue of difference within the students and school is the most pressing element to study at Cleveland Central Catholic and is in keeping with national trends (see Gregory & Mosely, 2004; Gregory, Nygreen, & Moran, 2006). If indeed race,

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<sup>75</sup> While the term Hispanic is often associated with limited-English ability and therefore an academic limitation, that is not the case of any of the students in this study. While these Hispanic students' first languages might have been Spanish, at the time of this study, all students had high native-English speaking levels. In fact almost all had become English dominant. For example, even in the school Spanish curricular offering of Heritage Spanish Speakers, all the students find it easier to speak in English.



wealth, and educational backgrounds were equalized by the Cleveland Central Catholic experience, why was not the discipline difference also equalized?

**Table 20**

*Discipline Points by Race and Gender*

Race & Gender	Mean	SD	N
White males	7.63	9.12	52
White females	3.76	7.69	49
Black males	11.82	10.26	117
Black females	7.49	7.36	141
Hispanic males	5.17	8.18	29
Hispanic females	5.12	4.86	26
Total	7.98	8.86	414

***Research Question 4:***

*What input and insights do recent graduates from this school have about the data from this research.*

As presented above, the thematic discourse analysis of the focus group transcripts revealed six themes: African American feelings about academics and discipline; the impact of clubs and common activities; various faiths and faith levels; differences in parental wealth, education, and academic push; the urban Catholic education as an egalitarian training ground for life; and the school as a family of peers and caring adults. When comparing these themes to the general findings of this study, four areas appear most salient: the discipline difference between student groups, the

issue of school elitism for some students, the religious diversity of the school, and the affective importance that the teaching staff have on students. Again and again, the students referred to the teachers and the adults as the bedrock of school family feelings that generate motivation of academic success, reach potential, behave positively, and integrate into the social fabric of the school. I contend that the adult professional community is the basis of the school's culture and that mitigates risk factors in the school's population.

First, the study's finding about student behavior and discipline was a topic that resonated with the discussion of the focus groups. While the issues of the discipline gap between the African American and the White and Hispanic students is clear, students firmly acknowledged that there is a racial difference in the frequency of negative behavior. Participants were, however, emphatic that discipline issues were not a wellspring of racist policy, where the disciplinarian himself is an African American alumnus of the school. This is akin to the common findings of urban educational research where there seems to be an urban cultural difference between most urban children and, especially, African American boys. The focus groups report that there is something especially within the African American males that tends to challenge rules and teacher authority. Students report that that behavior line does not appear to be the same for all students. While not stating the point explicitly, the focus group alumni hint that the mentality of defensiveness that many studies encounter in contemporary urban life is alive and well in the school environment. To borrow the title from McCloskey's (2009) book, it appears that the street does not stop at the doors of the school.

Academic differences between majority and minority students have been ascribed to poor schools, income, parental education, or home makeup (Jencks & Philips, 1998; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997, 2003), negative hidden curriculum (Hale, 1986; Howard, 2006; Paley, 2000), issues of a White hegemony (Porter, 1997), defiance reaction and oppositional culture (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986), African American cultural differences and deficits (cf. Kunjfu, 2006 and Payne, 1996, 2001), education as “acting white” (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Fisher, 2005), fear of being labeled effeminate (Hale, 1986), or something more insidious (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). These same reasons have generally been applied to explain the ethnoracial differences in behavior and discipline problems, which is the discipline gap. This is perhaps the most perplexing finding in this study: When there appears to be no difference in academic indicators, why is there clearly a discipline, or behavior, difference? This will be a far-reaching question posed by this research.

The topics of school prestige and the Catholic nature of the school resonated with the focus groups. While all focus group participants clearly had a fondness and respect for their alma mater, some students seemed to harbor an element of embarrassment when comparing their urban comprehensive school to other Catholic schools. While the White males clearly had a fondness for their school, they seemed to have a hedge or hesitance when discussing its academics: “It’s [Central Catholic] a good school, but . . . . If you had it to do over again, where would you go?” These four-year, White attendees of Cleveland Central Catholic seem to offer a hierarchy of Catholic schools and hint that the grass would have been “greener” or academics superior in schools that were usually

single-sex, athletic-powerhouses, and strictly college preparatory schools.<sup>76</sup> This longing for elitism was completely absent from the discussion of African American and Hispanic participants, who found no cultural, academic, or esteem deficit with their choice. The reputations of the other schools were known to all the student participants equally, though the White males lived closer to some of the schools mentioned and may have more peers attending them. While elitism and prestige are always difficult to quantify, Cleveland Central Catholic was clearly the least expensive of the Cleveland-area Catholic schools: \$5800 annual tuition in the year of this study, which might account for the perception, if not the reality, of a prestige deficit.

Baker and Riordan (1998) and Uecker (2009) have identified an “eliting” of the Catholic school, where the working class Catholics of the 1950s have moved into the upper classes of the 1990s and following. This is contrary to the emphasis and theoretical basis of the Catholic school. Vatican II’s *Gravissimum Educationis* (1966) states clearly that, “This Sacred Council of the Church earnestly entreats pastors and all the faithful to spare no sacrifice in helping Catholic schools fulfill their function in a continually more perfect way, and especially in caring for the needs of those who are poor in the goods of this world or who are deprived of the assistance and affection of a family . . .” (para. 9). Catholic education requires a social justice component. It is not meant to be self-serving or a mere vehicle for personal advancement or enrichment. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977) continues: “Knowledge is not to be

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<sup>76</sup> I must point out that I noted issues of their academic calibration when these students discussed how they would have performed in these other schools. They did not acknowledge that they would have had any curricular difficulties in a more competitive environment.

coincided as a means of material prosperity and success, but as a call to serve and to be responsible for others . . . . A policy of working for the common good is undertaken seriously as working for the building up of the kingdom of God” (para. 56-60). The desire for an elite education may not supersede previous goals of service, humanity, and religious education—at some of these elite schools.

Akin to this prestige element in the focus group was an opinion that Cleveland Central Catholic was “less” Catholic than some other Catholic schools. The terms of “public Catholic School” and “watered-down” Catholic made these feelings manifest. Again, this feeling was voiced by the White Catholic males in the focus group. The Hispanic and African American Catholic students again did not voice this issue. I however, believe that this perception may, in part, explain part of the negative findings between academic performance and a negative view of the school’s religiosity, as the students, especially White students from the Westside of Cleveland, tend to come from more homogeneously Catholic school populations and from that perspective may have stronger opinions about Cleveland Central Catholic’s Catholic ecumenical stance.

### *Implications and Recommendations for Practice*

The results of this study show that academic achievement is not merely a product of a child’s socioeconomic status, whereby her family’s wealth, education, and employment determine success in school. Additionally, race and culture did not have a significant impact on the students’ academic levels. To the contrary, the emotional life of the students with their graduation-minded friends, involvement in extracurriculars,

and perceptions of teacher caring were more predictive. From this study, gender appears to be the only unchangeable student demographic which has a significant bearing on student academic indicators. Based on this research, the following practices and policies would appear warranted:

1. Educators should renew their attempts to purge themselves of any residual antiquated feelings about the inevitability of the achievement gap between minority and majority students (see Kozol, 2005). While rarely too public, I believe that part of the negativity expressed toward the governmental fiats of *No Child Left Behind* is due to residual or unconscious notions that reducing this achievement gap is an impossible feat. This study demonstrated that even within a low wealth and urban setting an ethnoracial gap is not an inevitability. The factors of single-parent households, wealth, family education, and race/ethnicity do not appear to make marginal academic achievement a foregone conclusion.
2. School efforts to determine and improve the overall and affective school climate should receive increased support. There appears to be little doubt from this study that positive feelings associated with their classmates, their teachers, and their school increases the ability of students to achieve academically. Where possible this should include issues of values. While a thorny area in the public sphere, philosophy and ideology is always a part of education whether implicit or explicit. To pretend otherwise is counterproductive and denies students an important segment of their growth and personal development. Chesterton

states: “Every education teaches a philosophy, if not by dogma, then by suggestion, by implication, by atmosphere. Every part of that education has a connection with every other part. If it does not all combine to convey some general view of life, it is not education at all” (quoted in Avallone, 1999, p. 95).

Accordingly, the implicit or explicit curriculum may well combine to teach more than the sum of any of the individual parts. School mission and philosophy should be an explicit part of all schools, which should include both the cognitive and affective realms.

3. The role of non-athletic extracurriculars should be given greater consideration.

This study demonstrates the importance of those quieter, more private relationships between club participants and moderators. It is too often the case that the entire non-athletic budget is equal to that of only one sport, for instance football.

4. Conscious efforts to increase the positive feeling between students and the adult staff should be sought from the training of preservice teachers to the ongoing development of professional learning communities. Students should have opportunities to share with the adults in the building formal and informal time and cooperative and fun activities. Too often students are without role models. To quote the words of Saint John Bosco, “It is not enough for the students to be loved; they must feel loved” (quoted in Mullaly, 2006, p. 13). Or, stated more popularly: a student does not care how much a teacher knows until she knows how much the teacher cares.

5. From the negative findings of this study, the areas of gender and discipline differences should receive greater attention in all schools. In addition to disaggregating test scores and GPA, suspensions, detentions, and disciplinary referrals should be continually examined to see if minority students, especially African American males, are disproportionally represented. Likewise, difference in gender treatment and expectations in areas of leadership, academics, and discipline should be examined to determine if any implicit curriculum is reinforcing negative potentials of either gender, especially in the realms of traditional gender segregation (e.g., math, science, language arts, sports, and other extracurriculars).

### *Limitations of the Study*

Limitations of this research are as follows and should be considered when interpreting the results:

1. Only one small Catholic school was studied. While there was an attempt to examine within school variables based on length of Catholic education, comparisons with public school students is still limited
2. This study looked only at students' test scores and opinions, without regard to the adult population. The theoretical basis for the school's community, caring, and philosophical agreement among the adults was taken for granted. Explicit documentation for the existence of a theological/philosophic basis for the school was not examined.



3. The study took place only in a diocesan-owned Catholic school, which may make generalizability with other Catholic schools, not to mention public schools, difficult. A variety of Catholic high schools would be necessary to further any general Catholic school effect claim.
4. This study only examined students at one moment in time without longitudinal components. Replication of the study within this school and similar schools over time would do much to further the importance of these findings.
5. The disparity between the educational levels of the parents may have been a confounding variable—that is, elevating African American achievement while limiting the achievement of the White students. Accordingly, these differences could mask an achievement gap.

### *Recommendations for Further Study*

The following recommendations are made for further research related to this study:

1. The questions of the “discipline gap” in Catholic and private schools should receive greater emphasis. Not only would such scholarly endeavors benefit students who might be subjected to previously undetected practical differences but these smaller academic laboratories might be able to offer insights into the larger national phenomenon.
2. A replication of this study including a variety of Catholic schools—both urban and suburban (if not rural), elite and comprehensive school varieties,

and diocesan and religious order governance, etc. — would do much to see if the proposed theoretical basis and theological lived experience offers a general “Catholic” phenomenon. Additionally, inclusion of adult staff and administration should be studied as to their expressed theoretical position, religious basis, and caring levels of the students. HLM nesting statistics would appear recommended to explore if indeed students could be identified within individual school’s contextual environments (e.g., theological understanding, perceptions of caring, historical charism, governance, geographic setting, and student makeup). By way of replication, are issues of race and ethnicity, income, home composition, and parental education predictors of academic achievement? What are the dynamics at work within the school staff? Their employment motivations? Theological backgrounds? Philosophies of teaching? Caring levels (reasons and motivations)? Professional communities (social capital with other teachers, administrators, personal relationships, etc.)? What factors within the staff most directly influence the students’ perceptions of caring? Are there elements within this adult-student community that create educational press? Are issues of social capital and culture more pronounced in various school types? Again, nesting analyses would appear apt to bring about contextualized findings. Additionally, educational differences between the student’s parents should be held more constant.

3. Continued within-Catholic-School research should be performed where samples are by nature of their common environment more homogeneous. The comparing of radically different school populations, environments, and philosophic backgrounds is fraught with constant accusations of sampling differences and biases. While there is no perfect answer, within-Catholic research again offers a unique educational laboratory.
4. Research should be performed on the motivations for selecting Catholic schools. What are the student and parental motivations and are they different for: Catholic students and students of other faith traditions? Elite versus comprehensive schools? Inner-city<sup>77</sup> schools versus urban schools? Urban schools versus rural schools? Minority versus majority student populations? Do the various motivations for selecting a Catholic school influence school climate and academic achievement? Does Catholic school elitism create academic press? Is there a relationship between the indicators of academic achievement used in this study and types of parental and student motivations? Is there a social/academic/cultural press in the school community? Can that press be based on parental, student, or teacher motivations? I have previously argued that there are two significant choice

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<sup>77</sup> I assert that there are different types of motivations for students attending urban Catholic schools. I contend that students attend Catholic schools voluntarily or involuntarily. The voluntary students are those who are pulled toward Catholic schools due to academic motivation, attempts to gain prestige and reputation, following in the steps of family members or friends, or seeking to gain a religious foundation and background. The involuntary students, however, are those who are pushed away from the public school choices and use Catholic schools as a lifeboat. Accordingly, the Catholic alternative is merely a means not to have to participate in an educational system that is, or is perceived, as less desirable, less qualified, or less safe.

orientations (cf. Ogbu & Simmons, 1998) for inner-city youths selecting Catholic comprehensive schools: pull/voluntary (attracted by religious formation, quality education, elitism); push/involuntary (escapism from violence and/or poor public educational system as reported by Benson (2009), Reuters News Service (2001), and Loomis (2009). Motivational studies in urban Catholic education could include this possible distinction.

5. Empirical exploration of the impact and role of students of faiths other than Catholic in Catholic school should be studied. At present, most discussion is theoretical and anecdotal. Theoretical issues of the difference between homophilous versus heterophilous faith friendship groups of within-school samples is greatly needed. While Uecker (2008, 2009) finds that students in religious school appear more “religious” than their counterparts in public schools, the within-school diversity does not support conclusive findings. Additionally, the general religious/spiritual life of the adolescent is in need of empirical study. Most peer-reviewed published research on the religiosity of Catholic school students involves alumni after their high school experience. The religious experience of the high school years should be studied in more empirical detail. An examination of Uecker’s triad (2008) of religious development (family, friends, and religious instruction) is ripe for extensive research.
6. Lastly, the experience of racial minority status in religious schools would appear worthy of study, especially for African American students. Are issues

of “acting White” more pronounced where White is not only a general reality outside the school but part of a, at least possibly perceived, religiocultural difference and membership within the school? While this study shows no hint nor offers data to the contrary, membership differences would seem to hold some sway, perhaps in the variety of the Catholic educational system. Could, however, this be part of the discipline-gap difference among the African American males? Does religious unity or diversity impact behavior differences between the student groups?

### *Conclusion*

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which a relationship exists among the demographic, general school variables, and those variables specific to attending a Catholic high school. The findings of this current study were mixed, and were both consistent and divergent from previous research. While indicators of religiosity ran contrary to length of Catholic school attendance and school religiosity were counter to some indicators of academic achievement, the significance of this study was to deny the common perception that ethnoracial status, wealth, or family life and education determines academic achievement. These variables did not correlate significantly. Nor do they have any predictive power. Rather, this study found extracurricular involvement, perception of adult caring, gender, good behavior, graduation inclined peers, and desire for greater school religiosity in the school were predictive. Most troubling was the presence of a discipline gap between African

American Students (especially the males) and White and Hispanic students, though the focus groups participants were neither surprised nor did they attribute the discipline gap to any racist policy.

The original premise of this research has been supported—that is, that there tends to be a mitigation of the nationally pervasive, socioracial achievement gap within this particular school by virtue of student attendance. This attendance seems to offer a significantly important environment where influential extracurriculars take place, where students meet high-school-graduation-minded peers, where differences of faith and religious values exist, and where students experience relationships of caring from the adults.

Are there arguably grounds to contest these findings? Are there possibly confounding variables? As is always the case with research—even empirical research—, findings are always subject to probability and levels of significance. Scientific epistemology disavows absolute certainty on philosophical grounds. Those who are highly skeptical of the Catholic school effect would attribute a *prima facie* weakness of this study to selection bias. There exists an element of selection bias in all samples, because by definition samples are incomplete selections. Within any study of a school or group of schools, there is an element of selection, falling short of the whole population. The question, however, must be posed: Are the characteristics of the selected group such as to be different from those of the whole population? That would depend on the school(s) selected. There are certainly Catholic, and other schools, that do not represent the “typical” American school. These schools enroll students according a variety of

special criteria: academic abilities, religion, behavior, special needs, or privilege. In the case of Cleveland Central Catholic, however, I would argue that the selective bias is negligible, because I believe that this school's students are quite representative of America's high school students, most of whom are found in public high schools. Additionally, this particular urban Catholic school and many, many inner-city-Catholic schools have perhaps more in common socially and culturally with the students in the nation's<sup>78</sup> public "common schools" (see Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993) than they do elite and suburban<sup>79</sup> Catholic schools. The dynamic of the Catholic urban effect is not about the students when they arrive but about the function of the school's environment and climate during the students' educational, developmental, and social tenure. It is not the student that is the difference, but rather, the school with its philosophical and theological foundation is the basis of the Catholic effect.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, Cleveland Central Catholic cannot be caricatured as some elite private school that is far removed from the general situation of American schooling. Central Catholic is characterized by diversity. That diversity is found in students with diagnosed learning differences, ethnoracial groupings, parental educational levels, family income levels, student and parental motivations, student academic levels, family environments and households, and student behavior. This diversity<sup>80</sup> of students and their families allows this study to compare and examine each

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<sup>78</sup> That is to say that these Catholic schools are largely typical of the national student body but, perhaps, not of some subsets or neighborhoods. All generalities must be suspect.

<sup>79</sup> This tenet does not negate the importance of the mitigation of the ethnoracial difference. Rather, these elite schools do not have the population in need of this mitigation.

<sup>80</sup> It is important to note that the etymology of the word "Catholic"—*katholikos*—meaning "along or about the whole, universal, or diverse." Even a cursory examination of the history of Christianity reveals a

variable as a within-school variable. Additionally, many of these school characteristics are value added, which has the ability to limit the power of possible selection bias (once again see Hanushek & Taylor, 1990; Sander, 2001). The social capital embedded in parents and students who select this school or the importance of making explicit payments of time, talent, and treasure for education cannot, however, be denied. Nevertheless, the question remains: Are these factors sufficient to negate this study's findings in their entirety or merely to prompt caution, as should always be the case with research?

As I pointed out in the above limitations section (p. 229), this research—as does all research—has its limits. It is a sampling. The African American parents had higher levels of education than did the White parents. Does this create a uniquely different sample from “typical” students? This difference and other limitations, however, only serve to further an inevitable caveat that all research should have. Research findings—including those from this study—are not doctrine. Rather, the goal of this research is to be a compass by which an educator might journey in this time of systemic darkness for too many students. Within the polemic of research between public and private education, skepticism is welcomed, as it questions the research so as to make it better. What is not acceptable is blind fanaticism at either pole, as it will only serve to prolong the night of educational dysfunction and inequality for America's students for some adult doctrinaire politic. As a contemporary playwright states, “Even if you feel certainty, it is an emotion and not a fact” (Shanley, 2005, Act 1, Scene 8, p. 55).

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dynamic of “unity in diversity.” This historical ecclesial diversity may best describe as the origins of the early church, which is too often forgotten.



Accordingly, I believe that the findings of this study are not solely the domain of the Catholic school. The social variables of positive interactions among classmates and caring adults exist in many non-Catholic schools. I believe that the historic dynamic of theologically-based progressive educational praxis lived and wrought within the challenges of Cleveland's inner city has formed a setting and community of adults who share a religiously-based caring and educational mission, which is both explicit and implicit. While this school's educational dynamic is enabled and nurtured by its faith-based orientation and tradition, the educational product is not solely due to a Catholic intellectual foundation or drive toward community. Moreover, there may be some Catholic schools for which this dynamic is not substantive despite its theoretical importance. All public or non-Catholic schools, however, have the ability to form secular social capital dynamics<sup>81</sup> akin to Central Catholic that can mitigate ethnoracial disparity, such as the adult caring environment. We might consider the caring profession of nursing as a possible parallel example. While there are some nursing philosophies that have significant religious overtones, the caring profession of nursing can also be found within wholly-secular circles. Yet this caring profession can be sustained and enriched by insights, practices, and dynamics found in either realm. No dichotomous gulf exists there. What then is the place of the religious-based journey in either educational or nursing best practices? Faith-based schooling is a well-trod, meaningful, value-laden, and supportive path leading to the enrichment and care of others. It is good and time-honorable. It is the path I have chosen, but it is not the only

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<sup>81</sup> Consider the "personalization" movement within schools (see Cresswell & Rasmussen, 1996; Keefe, 2007).

path. A zero-sum mentality must be eliminated. Good practices and policies should be explored, evaluated, and/or implemented wherever and whenever they are found.

To return to the beginning, Glasser's quote (see p. 1) is most timely, as he believes that education is relationship-based. During the past two decades in the United States, the "curriculum revolution" shifted the paradigm from a content-driven curriculum to one that emphasized transaction and interaction with caring as a core concept. Mayeroff asserts that the primacy of caring is to help the other grow. A teacher should know a student personally and adjust her instruction and behavior to respond to the student. The teacher must believe that the students will develop their potential. If faculty members and educational staff effectively organize the curriculum and school environment to offer a context of relationships, students will learn. This learning is mediated by caring. Accordingly, the teacher role is a caring role. The Sacred Congregation on Catholic Education calls this affective reality a "civilization of love" (1982, para. 19), which is developed by caring adults for whom their educational vocation is a "work of faith and a labor of love" (1987, p. 281; cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:3). Additionally, Pius XII stated in 1955 that: "'Teacher' is the highest title that can be given to an instructor. The teacher's function demands something higher and more profound than the function of the person who merely communicates a knowledge of things. The 'teacher' is a person who knows how to create a close relationship between his [her] own soul and the soul of the child" (quoted in Jacobs, 2001, p. 53).

Spanning educational history from the communal learning groups of Socrates and Plato (see Gross, 2002) to Cornelius-White and Harbaugh's (2010) new

encapsulation of child-centered education, the group, the community, and students in relationships are vital to learning, growing, and being. Humans need to belong. This can be documented throughout humanity's existence from the ancient writings of the *Gilgamesh Epic*, the *Book of Genesis* and Cicero's *De Amicitia*, through the fledgling field of Durkheim's sociology and Erickson and Maslow's development psychology to the more recent work of Deci, Delpit, and Dweck. For educators to forget this is to forget that we must teach individuals, not the masses. We teach students, not subjects. This possible paradigm shift of caring happens when a question from a teacher is not so much a matter of a right or wrong answer, or not so much seeking merely a contentual answer, but also, or more importantly, seeking "the involvement of the cared-for" (Noddings, 1984, p. 176).<sup>82</sup> The caring teacher is one who receives the students as individuals and looks at the subject matter not for them but with them. The emphasis is on needs, relations, and responses that are most appropriate for the students. It is the most carefully and best rooted meaning of child-centeredness. Caring requires teachers to elicit and listen to how students are feeling, to evaluate their purposes, to help them engage in self-evaluation, and to help them grow as participants in caring relationships (Noddings, 1992).

Students who are "at-risk" of performing poorly or failing at school are more in need for positive relationships at school. Research clearly reports that these students are more likely to have poor relationships with teachers and adults, more disruptive in classes, more likely to disengage from academic activities, and more likely to drop-out

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<sup>82</sup> This echoes Charlton's (1998) refrain of "nothing about us without us." Likewise, students must be intimately involved in their own education. Students are active participants, not passive recipients.

of school before they graduate (Eccles, Midgley, Wigfield, Burchanan, Reuman, Flanagan, & MacIver, 1993; Finn, 1989). Other research has shown significant improvements in behavior, academic achievement, and on-time attendance when students experience caring relationship with their teachers and when the overall school climate feels supportive (Baker, Terry, Bridger, & Winson, 1997; Finn 1989; Kramer-Schollosser, 1992; Swartz, Merten, & Bursik, 1987). This paradigm shift to an affective quality of schools has the potential of radicalizing school improvement. Irwin Blumer, school superintendent of Newton Massachusetts, states:

Much of what passes for school reform is superficial and ultimately fails because the difficulty of the task—institutional change—is underestimated. Real change can only come as a result of the commitments of both the minds and hearts of the total school community—teachers, parents, students, administrators and school boards. Reform should be based on careful identification of deeply and commonly held values (quoted in Sergionanni, 1994, p. 1).

This fundamental difference is the basis for all other important change. It is a team, community, and affective shift akin to what transpired in the formerly impersonal domains of the manufacturing industry (cf. Crawford, Bodine, & Hoglund, 1994; Senge, 1990).

This caring educational relationship happens best in an association where both students and teacher have ultimate worth and dignity, where there is a relationship of fellow learners. This is the theological and philosophical basis for Catholic education that is most apt to be transmitted from doctrine to practice is made manifest within the

adult community of Catholic institutes. The words of an unnamed Australian Aboriginal woman make the point most poignantly: "If you have come to help me, you are wasting my time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together" (quoted in LaNave, 1997, p. 25). It is a poor teacher who does not learn from her students, or in the words of Seneca the Younger: *docendo discimus* (i.e., by teaching, we learn). Likewise, in the words of Leonardo DaVinci, "It is a poor student who does not surpass his[her] master [sic]". Modern social scientists might refer to this as the mutual reciprocity (Stryker, 1980) within Bandura's social learning theory (1977), or Vygotsky's cooperative dimension within the "zone of proximal development" (see Goldstein, 1999). This interaction is more apt to happen where information is not strictly passed from dispensers to receptacles. Collaborative meaning, interpretation, and analysis calls for a relationship between participants. LaNave (1997) states the role of the Catholic teacher is multileveled. He states: "Our role is not to be primarily "dispensers of information," but "midwives of meaning" — helping to give birth to the work of the Spirit within our students" (1997, p. 18)

We must consider not only the "what" and "how" of teachers, but more importantly, the "why." What is the philosophy and anthropology operating when they work with students? Education is not a profession; it is a vocation that evokes a response in the educator a commitment of the whole person: body, mind, and spirit. It is a caring profession. Mayeroff (1971) states: "To care for another person in the most significant sense, is to help him [or her] grow and actualize him[her]self" (p. 1).

Accordingly, a caring teacher is neither an instrument of domination for herself or for a “culture of power” in the words of Delpit (see 1995, p. 24). Again according to Mayeroff,

The union with the other in caring differs from a parasitic relationship. Instead of trying to dominate and possess the other, I [the caregiver] want it [the cared-for] to grow in its own right, or, as we sometimes say, “to be itself,” and I feel the other’s growth as bound up with my own sense of well-being. . . . In caring I experience the other as having potentialities and the need to grow[.] . . . In addition, I experience the other as needing me in order to grow[.] . . . I do not experience being needed by the other as a relationship that gives me power over it and provides me with something to dominate, but rather as a kind of trust. It is as if I had been entrusted with the care of the other in a way that is *the antithesis* [my emphasis] of possessing and manipulating it as I please (1971, pp. 8-9).

The care-giver’s selflessness in their relationship with the cared-for has a reciprocal benefit, which is the antithesis of power. Horace Mann hinted at this in the words attributed to him: she “who forms is greater than . . . [she] who commands.” Or again, the Vatican’s Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1982) states that the teacher “. . . is not simply a professional person who systematically transmits a body of knowledge in the context of a school . . . one who helps to form human persons. The task of a teacher goes well beyond transmission of knowledge” (para. 16).

This caring relationship might be done at the risk of personal or financial self-interest.<sup>83</sup> Abraham Maslow asserts that exceptional individuals in social endeavors integrate their tasks with their perception of themselves (see Senge, 1990). I would argue that the same is true for teachers—that is, the tasks of the teacher are “no longer separate from the self.” (quote in Senge, 1990, p. 208). The work is such that the worker identifies with this task so strongly that it is integral and defining of the self. Accordingly, the individuals cannot be their “real selves” without their responsibilities. Accordingly, the work and the person are inextricably bound not only vocationally but—within the teaching realm—within a high level of personal relationship with the students in the dynamic of learning and caring. Elbaz (1992) posits that teachers who work and teach with the more holistic moral voice have three unique elements: a sense of hope, attentiveness to particular students, and a caring for differences among students. Grant (1988) states:

A school is a community that cannot disavow responsibility for either intellectual or moral value. The adults epitomize some version of character to pupils—by ignoring or responding to incidents of racism in the classroom and hallway, by the manner in which they answer a child’s earnest inquiry, by the respect they show for qualities of intellect, by the agreements they make about what behavior will not be tolerated as well as what actions will be honored. Schools are

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<sup>83</sup> Operative in this notion within Catholic education may well be the value, or religious tenet of *Kenosis*, which is Greek for “self-emptying.” On a spiritual plane in one’s daily life, a person may attempt to follow the model of Christ, who emptied Himself of His divinity to become human (cf. Philippians 2:7). It is often the justification for selfless-work that people perform that others might consider consuming or all encompassing of the personal life or gain such as social work, becoming missionaries, teaching, etc. (see Cronin, 1994).

institutions that educate the emotions, *indelibly affecting both heart and mind* [my emphasis] (pp. 1-2).

In short, the caring required for *instruction for meaning* has an inclusive quality that is not found in more impersonal careers and actions. Again, I believe that like nursing teaching is “a caring profession” (see Sawatzky, Enns, Ashcroft, Davis, & Harder, 2009). This caring dynamic seems to have declined greatly in American education when the industrial modality of factory-model, box schools and education as a work commodity became more widespread.

Schools are analogous to other realms of growth, learning, insight, and advancement. Menninger (1973) tells of such an insight in his Menninger Institute. He argued that the efficacy of the institute could be enhanced by everyone— from the therapist and secretary to the maintenance staff— going about their duties with a great deal of genuine love, joyful caring, and gentle affirmation. Accordingly, he found that the institute’s productivity and healing was significantly better. It seems that his affective shift in his institution brought about an ability for the individuals to “hear” one another that was necessary for greater communication and healing. This is what some humanistic psychologists call listening with the “third ear,” akin to reflective listening. Can authentic and genuine learning take place where students are not heard? Of course not. Can one hear without caring? Can one care without love?

Any less involvement or commitment to students may be perceived, if not be, perfunctory or superficial—that is, where individuals are aloof and perceived as merely going through the motions. What is the motivation of teaching? The motivation to be a



teacher is a curious composite of fulfilling one's self, giving of one's self, touching the future, enjoying youth, and earning a living. Each teacher must answer the motivation question for herself. Within the Benedictine tradition in which I was educated, the motto is commonly expressed: "The love of learning and the desire for God."

Some argue that the teachers receive possibly more in the teaching dynamic than do their students. Moreover, within the religious tradition, teaching is a spiritual gift<sup>84</sup> given by God, which must be given for the good of humankind and for the salvation of the individual. Sister P. J. Sweeney states:

Teaching . . . is not simply a gift given. It is also necessarily a gift shared.

Catholic education is a gift given and shared, a blessing to the whole Church and to the nation, and teachers are the heart and soul of Catholic education (quoted in Guerra 1988, n.p.).

This reciprocal emphasis may partially explain what has been attributed as the unique role of the Catholic school teacher. Peter Benson describes Catholic school teachers as follows:

In most lines of work, salary satisfaction and job satisfaction go hand-in-hand. It is only when we understand the motivation of Catholic teachers that we can see what is going on. The top three motivations for Catholic school teachers are: a desire to teach in a quality educational environment, the love of teaching, and

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<sup>84</sup> The New Testament repeatedly lists teaching as a specialized gift of the Holy Spirit (see I Corinthians 12:8-19, 28-30; Ephesians 4:11; Romans 12:6-8; 1)

the view that teaching is an important kind of ministry.<sup>85</sup> Salary and benefits rank at the very bottom of motivations. So we are blessed with dedicated teachers. (quoted in Guerra, 1988, p. 14).

O’Keefe (2003) also speaks of the “financial disincentives” (p. 6) of teachers in Catholic education, especially in the inner-cities. While the support of parents, localized leadership, and a sense of ownership are important, O’Keefe finds that a sense of adult community, mission, and vocation were also very important. It is this community of veteran staff members in Cleveland Central Catholic that, I would assert, is what Rutter, et al., (1979) call a core of “sustaining members,” or strong association of senior teachers (p. 138). This competent core, schooled in Catholic culture, generates a climatic tide in a school that raises all the academic boats (see also Grant, 1988). Hooks (2000) offers a poignant reflection on solidarity with the poor that is à propos to the solidarity needed between teachers and students. She states:

To see the poor as ourselves we must want for the poor what we want for ourselves. By living simply, we all express our solidarity with the poor and our recognition that gluttonous consumption must end. . . . Solidarity with the poor is the only path that can lead our nation back to a vision of community that can effectively challenge and eliminate violence and exploitation. It invites us to embrace an ethics of compassion and sharing . . . (pp. 48-49).

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<sup>85</sup> I find it interesting that while the United States has a Department and Secretary of Education, some other countries have Ministries and Ministers of Education (e.g., New Zealand, Canada, Singapore, and the United Kingdom). I wonder if there are vocational differences in their concepts of education that the term itself purports—that is, a more holistic and self-surrendering—if not caring—frame of reference.

These notions are very applicable to schools. This level of caring and involvement, I would contend, must go beyond professional obligations to personal interests and constant dedication to fulfill the basic, educational, and emotional needs of youth, through love, acceptance, recognition, and affirmation.

What is social capital again? It is the property of the relational ties among individuals within a social system that plays a key role in social and behavioral phenomena. There is, however, the following caveat: “Like human capital, social capital is intangible and abstract and accumulated for productive ends. Whereas human capital is acquired through education, social capital develops around sustained social<sup>86</sup> interactions” (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 13). Within this study of Cleveland Central Catholic High School, social capital is clearly present in two significant forms: their relationships with fellow students in school activities and with graduation-minded peers and their relationships with caring teachers, whom the student can trust. Accordingly, social capital is indicated by these two variables. These two variables are significant predictors of academic achievement. Therefore, social capital is a predictor of academic achievement.

The importance of caring and community is expressed succinctly by Vygotsky’s axiom: “through others we become ourselves” (quoted in Bakhurst, 2007, p. 65). Accordingly, the mind and learning are socially constructed. Our mind and personhood are appropriations of society, where our mental reality is lived in human enterprise, made meaningful by communication, and mediated by culture. Therefore, education, in its broadest sense, makes us who we are—that is, it promotes the full and active life of

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<sup>86</sup> I would argue that where a school is a social force of community and teacher-student caring, social capital and human capital are transmitted at the same time.

an intellectually and morally accomplished social being (Bakhurst, 2007). Again, returning to the beginning and the challenge of Glasser, Sergiovanni also says the same with more of an institutional flare:

The story I tell is . . . a simple one. Though most principals, superintendents, and teachers have a desire to do better and are working as hard as they can to provide a quality education to every student they serve, the road is rough and the going slow. The lead villain in this frustrating drama is the loss of community in our schools and in society itself. If we want to rewrite the script to enable good schools to flourish, we need to rebuild community. Community building must become the heart of any school improvement effort. Whatever else is involved—improving teaching, developing sensible curriculum, creating new forms of governance, providing more authentic assessment, empowering teachers and parents, increasing professionalism—it must rest on a foundation of community building (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. xi).

Accordingly, I contend that the transformative, healing, nurturing, and evocative nature of education is not only mediated through the shared relationships and educational activities of students and their peers but also, and perhaps more importantly, with their relationships with their teachers and school staff. This is what social capital (including the content area of cultural capital) is all about—that is, that “relationships matter” (Field, 2004, p. 1).

This educational process is perfected by the caring and love of the educational community—or, to quote Benedict XVI, “Knowledge without love is sterile” (2009, para.

30). This quotation echoes the words spoken by Pius XII from 1954: teachers are to be parents “of the soul<sup>87</sup> more than propagators of sterile information” (quoted in Jacobs, 2001, p. 52). The self-understanding of the Catholic Church as expressed in the Second Vatican Council again speaks of the educational mission to which it is committed:

The Church’s role is especially evident in Catholic schools. These are no less zealous than other schools in the promotion of culture and in the human formation of young people. It is, however, the special function of the Catholic school to develop in the community an atmosphere animated by a spirit of liberty and charity based on the Gospel. It enables young people [and adults], while developing their own personality, to grow at the same time in that new life which has been given them in baptism. Finally it so orients the whole of human culture to the message of salvation that the knowledge which the pupils acquire of the world, of life and of man [humankind] is illuminated by faith (Vatican II, *Gravissimum educationis* (Decree on Christian Education), no. 8).

Within Catholic schools as within Catholic theological teaching and faith, life and salvation are wrought with others and within community. The question for research on Catholic education is: How faithful are its institutions to this lofty undertaking? For those who are faithful, the educational possibilities are unparalleled.

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<sup>87</sup> Pius XII does not directly reference Plato here, but the notion is clearly similar—that is, the relationship between parents of the soul and children of the soul. In the *Symposium* (pts. 201-209), Plato discusses the nature of learning that Socrates was taught by the Priestess Diotima: Physical beings simply pass on physical life to mortal children, but intellectual and moral beings transmit mental and moral attainment to their disciples—their children of the soul—through the power of love. Accordingly, the pinnacle of educational relationships bespeaks a platonic intimacy akin to family, where the transmission of learning, or *sophia*, becomes the life’s blood of a relationships between student and teacher, who are bound—in the words of Melville (*Moby Dick*, ch. 125)—“by cords woven of heart-strings.”

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### 2004 Student Survey (Hollis, 2006)

#### Cleveland Central Catholic Student Survey

**Instructions:** Answer questions as they relate to you. For most answers, check the boxes most applicable to you or fill in the blanks. Thank you! -- Steering Committee for OCSAA, North Central.

#### Demographic Information

1. I am a student in: (Place a check in the appropriate box.)  
☐ Grade 9    ☐ Grade 10    ☐ Grade 11    ☐ Grade 12
2. I am:  
☐ A. male    ☐ B. female
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I live:  
  
A. on the east side of Cleveland  
B. on the west side of Cleveland  
C. on the south side of Cleveland  
D. in a suburb of Cleveland
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. How I get to school:  
A. I walk    B. I ride the RTA    C. I ride on school transportation  
D. I drive or get a ride (parent or car pool)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Ethnic background (optional)  
A. White    B. Black    C. Hispanic    D. Native American  
E. Asian    F. Pacific Islander    G. multi-racial
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Faith tradition  
A. Catholic  
B. Protestant (Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, etc.)  
C. non-Christian tradition

- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. At this point in my high school planning, I expect to complete  
a. high school  
b. high school plus 2 year college program  
c. 4 year college  
d. 4 year college plus graduate school  
e. other
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. On the average, I spend about this much time on homework each night:  
  
A. 30 minutes or less   B. 1 hour   C. 2 hours   D. 3 or more hours
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I have an outside job of approximately how many hours per week:  
  
A. None   B. under 5 hrs.   C. 5-10 hrs.   D. 10-20 hrs.   E. 20-30 hrs.

**For the remaining questions, select from the following choices:**

- A. strongly agree  
B. agree  
C. disagree  
D. strongly disagree  
E. no opinion/does not apply
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I feel safe at Cleveland Central Catholic High School
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I feel like I belong at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I feel challenged at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Cleveland Central Catholic High School is preparing me well for what I want to do after high school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I am treated with respect by teachers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I am treated with respect by school administrators.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I understand how to apply what I learned at Cleveland Central Catholic High School to real-life situations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I am treated with respect by the staff.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I am treated with respect by other students at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.



- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. Students respect those who are different in abilities and talents at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. Students demonstrate acceptance of anyone who is different from themselves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. There is an expectation at Cleveland Central Catholic High School that everyone – administration, faculty, staff, coaches, and students – live and practice Catholic/Christian values.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. Cleveland Central Catholic High School's mission and philosophy are understood well.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. The retreat program at Cleveland Central Catholic High School has made a difference in my life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. Students are more involved in Christian service because of Cleveland Central Catholic High School's service project program.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. The people most responsible for what I learn are my teachers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. School is fun at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. I like Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. I think Cleveland Central Catholic High School is a good school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. I like the students at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. I like to learn.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31. I am giving my best effort at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 32. Participating in extracurricular activities is important to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 33. Students at Cleveland Central Catholic High School respect other students who are different than they are.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 34. Theology class is seen as important by the faculty of Cleveland Central Catholic High School.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 35. Theology class is seen as important by the students at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 36. Students of Cleveland Central Catholic High School obtain a good understanding of the Catholic faith.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 37. Cleveland Central Catholic High School is preparing students to be good Christians and religious people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 38. Theology classes at Cleveland Central Catholic High School help me to pray and develop a deeper spiritual life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 39. The school masses and prayer services are helpful and meaningful for the students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 40. At Cleveland Central Catholic High School students have the opportunity to talk to adults about their beliefs and values.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 41. Religious activities are given a priority at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 42. My teachers expect students to do their best.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 43. My teachers are understanding when students have personal problems.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 44. My teachers set high standards for achievement in their classes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 45. My teachers have confidence in me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 46. My teachers know me well.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 47. My teachers listen to my ideas.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 48. My teachers care about me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 49. My teachers make learning fun.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 50. My teachers are excited about the subject they teach.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 51. My teachers give me individual attention when I need it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 52. My teachers use a variety of activities each day during the class period.

- \_\_\_\_ 53. My teachers challenge me to do better.
- \_\_\_\_ 54. Most of my tests at Cleveland Central Catholic High School contain essay or short answer questions where I have to explain my thinking.
- \_\_\_\_ 55. My tests contain a majority of objective questions.
- \_\_\_\_ 56. I am frequently stressed about school work.
- \_\_\_\_ 57. Most of my classes are interesting.
- \_\_\_\_ 58. I am ready for the real world in my ability to write.
- \_\_\_\_ 59. I am ready for the real world in my ability to read.
- \_\_\_\_ 60. I am ready for the real world in my ability to do mathematics.
- \_\_\_\_ 61. I am ready for the real world in my ability to present information or give a talk.
- \_\_\_\_ 62. I am ready for the real world in my technology skills.
- \_\_\_\_ 63. Most of my classes are giving me a foundation for future skills I will need.
- \_\_\_\_ 64. I am taking or plan to take more than the required number of technology classes.
- \_\_\_\_ 65. The computer classes at Cleveland Central Catholic High School meet my needs as a student.
- \_\_\_\_ 66. The availability of computers at Cleveland Central Catholic High School meets my needs as a student.
- \_\_\_\_ 67. Computer classes at Cleveland Central Catholic High School are challenging.
- \_\_\_\_ 68. As a result of taking technology courses at Cleveland Central Catholic High School, I feel confident using computer technology.
- \_\_\_\_ 69. In my classes, time is spent listening to the teacher talk.
- \_\_\_\_ 70. In my classes, time is spent in whole-class discussions.
- \_\_\_\_ 71. In my classes, time is spent working in small groups.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 72. In most of my classes, time is spent reading.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 73. In my classes, time is spent answering questions from a book or worksheet.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 74. In my classes, time is spent working on projects or research.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 75. In my classes, time is spent doing work that I find meaningful.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 76. In my classes, teachers are comfortable using technology.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 77. I work well when I am working on projects or research.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 78. I work well when the teacher is leading a discussion with the whole class.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 79. I work well when I am working in a small group.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 80. I work well when I am working by myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 81. Friendship is a key value at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 82. Cleveland Central Catholic High School promotes strong leadership skills in students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 83. School social activities are fun and help me make friends.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 84. The variety of club offerings at Cleveland Central Catholic High School accommodate the needs and interests of the students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 85. I am an active member of a club at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 86. Club activities are meaningful and fun.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 87. The athletic program helps achieve the goals of Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 88. The athletic program meets the needs and interests of students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 89. I participate in interscholastic sports at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 90. Sports at Cleveland Central Catholic High School foster teamwork and friendship, self-discipline and self-confidence.

- \_\_\_\_ 91. All sports are treated equally at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- \_\_\_\_ 92. Cleveland Central Catholic High School offers equal opportunity for both boys and girls in sports.
- \_\_\_\_ 93. Sports and academics are in balance with each other at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- \_\_\_\_ 94. The size of the classrooms at Cleveland Central Catholic High School is adequate.
- \_\_\_\_ 95. The size of the hallways at Cleveland Central Catholic High School is adequate.
- \_\_\_\_ 96. The size of the stairwells at Cleveland Central Catholic High School is adequate.
- \_\_\_\_ 97. The size of the restrooms at Cleveland Central Catholic High School is adequate.
- \_\_\_\_ 98. The athletic facilities at Cleveland Central Catholic High School are adequate.

#### **General Comments**

99.     What do you like about Cleveland Central Catholic High School?
100.    What do you wish were different at Cleveland Central Catholic High School?

## APPENDIX B

### Types of Catholic High Schools in the Cleveland Area (excluding Akron):

<b>Name and Curriculum Type</b>	<b>Geographic Setting</b>	<b>Student Population</b>	<b>Charism/ Governance</b>
1. Beaumont Academy, college prep.	Suburban	Single sex (female)	Ursuline Sisters Charism
2. Benedictine HS, college prep.	Inner city	Single sex (male)	Benedictine Charism
3. Cleveland Central Catholic HS, comprehensive (with special education)	Inner city	Coed	Diocesan
4. Gilmore Academy, college prep.	Suburb	Coed	Independent Schools, (Brothers of the Holy Cross)
5. Holy Name HS, comprehensive	First-ring suburb	Coed	Diocesan
6. Lake Catholic HS, comprehensive	Distant suburb (Lake County)	Coed	Diocesan
7. Lorain Catholic HS, comprehensive with a college prep emphasis	Distant suburb (Lorain County)	Coed	Diocesan
8. Magnificat HS, college prep.	Suburb	Single sex (female)	Sisters of the Humility of Mary
9. Notre Dame/Cathedral Latin HS, college prep.	Distant suburb (Geauga County)	Coed	Sisters of Notre Dame Charism
10. Padua Franciscan HS, college prep.	First-ring suburb	Coed	Franciscan Charism
11. Regina HS, college prep.	Suburb	Single sex (female)	Sisters of Notre Dame Charism

<b>Name and Curriculum Type</b>	<b>Geographic Setting</b>	<b>Student Population</b>	<b>Charism/ Governance</b>
12. St. Edwards HS, college prep.	First-ring suburb	Single sex (male)	Brothers of the Holy Cross Charism
13. St. Ignatius HS, college prep.	Inner city	Single sex (male)	Jesuit Charism
14. St. Joseph Academy, college prep.	Urban	Single sex (female)	Sisters of St. Joseph Charism
15. St. Martin de Porres HS, college prep.	Inner city	Coed	Cristo Rey Model (work & school)
16. Trinity HS, college prep.	First-ring suburb	Coed	Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis Charism
17. VA/SJ HS, comprehensive	Urban	Coed	Diocesan*
18. Walsh Jesuit, college prep.	Distant suburb (Summit County)	Coed	Jesuit Charism

\* There are strong elements of the charisms of the Marianist Brothers and Ursuline Sisters.

## APPENDIX C

### Division of Items and Factors from the 2004 Student Questionnaire (Hollis, 2006)

#### **Factor 1: Teacher Attributes (15 items), Alpha .90**

- 14. I am treated with respect by teachers.
- 17. I am treated with respect by the staff.
- 42. My teachers expect students to do their best.
- 43. My teachers are understanding when students have personal problems.
- 44. My teachers set high standards for achievement in their classes.
- 45. My teachers have confidence in me.
- 46. My teachers know me well.
- 47. My teachers listen to my ideas.
- 48. My teachers care about me.
- 49. My teachers make learning fun.
- 51. My teachers give me individual attention when I need it.
- 52. My teachers use a variety of activities each day during the class period.
- 53. My teachers challenge me to do better.
- 63. Most of my classes are giving me a foundation for future skills I will need.
- 78. I work well when the teacher is leading a discussion with the whole class.

#### **Factor 2: Religious Components (13 items), Alpha .85**

- 16. I understand how to apply what I learned at Cleveland Central Catholic High School to real-life situations.
- 22. Cleveland Central Catholic High School's mission and philosophy are understood well.
- 23. The retreat program at Cleveland Central Catholic High School has made a difference in my life.
- 24. Students are more involved in Christian service because of Cleveland Central Catholic High School's service project program
- 25. The people most responsible for what I learn are my teachers.
- 34. Theology class is seen as important by the faculty of Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- 35. Theology class is seen as important by the students at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- 36. Students of Cleveland Central Catholic High School obtain a good understanding of the Catholic faith.
- 37. Cleveland Central Catholic High School is preparing students to be good Christians and religious people.
- 38. Theology classes at Cleveland Central Catholic High School help me to pray and develop a deeper spiritual life.
- 39. The school masses and prayer services are helpful and meaningful for the students.



- 40. At Cleveland Central Catholic High School students have the opportunity to talk to adults about their beliefs and values.
- 41. Religious activities are given a priority at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.

**Factor 3: School Fondness (5 items), Alpha .85**

- 11. I feel like I belong at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- 26. School is fun at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- 27. I like Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- 28. I think Cleveland Central Catholic High School is a good school.
- 29. I like the students at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.

**Factor 4: Respect (4 items), Alpha .77**

- 18. I am treated with respect by other students at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- 19. Students respect those who are different in abilities and talents at Cleveland Central Catholic High School
- 20. Students demonstrate acceptance of anyone who is different from themselves.
- 33. Students at Cleveland Central Catholic High School respect other students who are different than they are

**Factor 5: Safety and Physical Plant (6 items), Alpha .75**

- 10. I feel safe at Cleveland Central Catholic High School
- 94. The size of the classrooms at Cleveland Central Catholic High School is adequate.
- 95. The size of the hallways at Cleveland Central Catholic High School is adequate.
- 96. The size of the stairwells at Cleveland Central Catholic High School is adequate.
- 97. The size of the restrooms at Cleveland Central Catholic High School is adequate.
- 98. The athletic facilities at Cleveland Central Catholic High School are adequate

**Factor 6: Technology and Extended Thinking (6 items), Alpha .71**

- 54. Most of my tests at Cleveland Central Catholic High School contain essay or short answer questions where I have to explain my thinking.
- 64. I am taking or plan to take more than the required number of technology classes.
- 65. The computer classes at Cleveland Central Catholic High School meet my needs as a student.
- 66. The availability of computers at Cleveland Central Catholic High School meets my needs as a student.
- 67. Computer classes at Cleveland Central Catholic High School are challenging.
- 68. As a result of taking technology courses at Cleveland Central Catholic High School, I feel confident using computer technology.

**Factor 7: Quality of Program (4 items), Alpha .70**

- 12. I feel challenged at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- 13. Cleveland Central Catholic High School is preparing me well for what I want to do after high school.
- 87. The athletic program helps achieve the goals of Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- 88. The athletic program meets the needs and interests of students.

**Factor 8: Progressive Instruction (6 items), Alpha .72**

- 57. Most of my classes are interesting.
- 70. In my classes, time is spent in whole-class discussions.
- 71. In my classes, time is spent working in small groups.
- 74. In my classes, time is spent working on projects or research.
- 75. In my classes, time is spent doing work that I find meaningful.
- 76. In my classes, teachers are comfortable using technology.

**Factor 9: Real World & Self-Efficacy (5 items), Alpha .66**

- 58. I am ready for the real world in my ability to write.
- 60. I am ready for the real world in my ability to do mathematics.
- 61. I am ready for the real world in my ability to present information or give a talk.
- 77. I work well when I am working on projects or research.
- 80. I work well when I am working by myself.

**Factor 10: Extracurricular Values (4 items), Alpha .69**

- 32. Participating in extracurricular activities is important to me.
- 83. School social activities are fun and help me make friends.
- 89. I participate in interscholastic sports at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- 90. Sports at Cleveland Central Catholic High School foster teamwork and friendship, self-discipline and self-confidence.

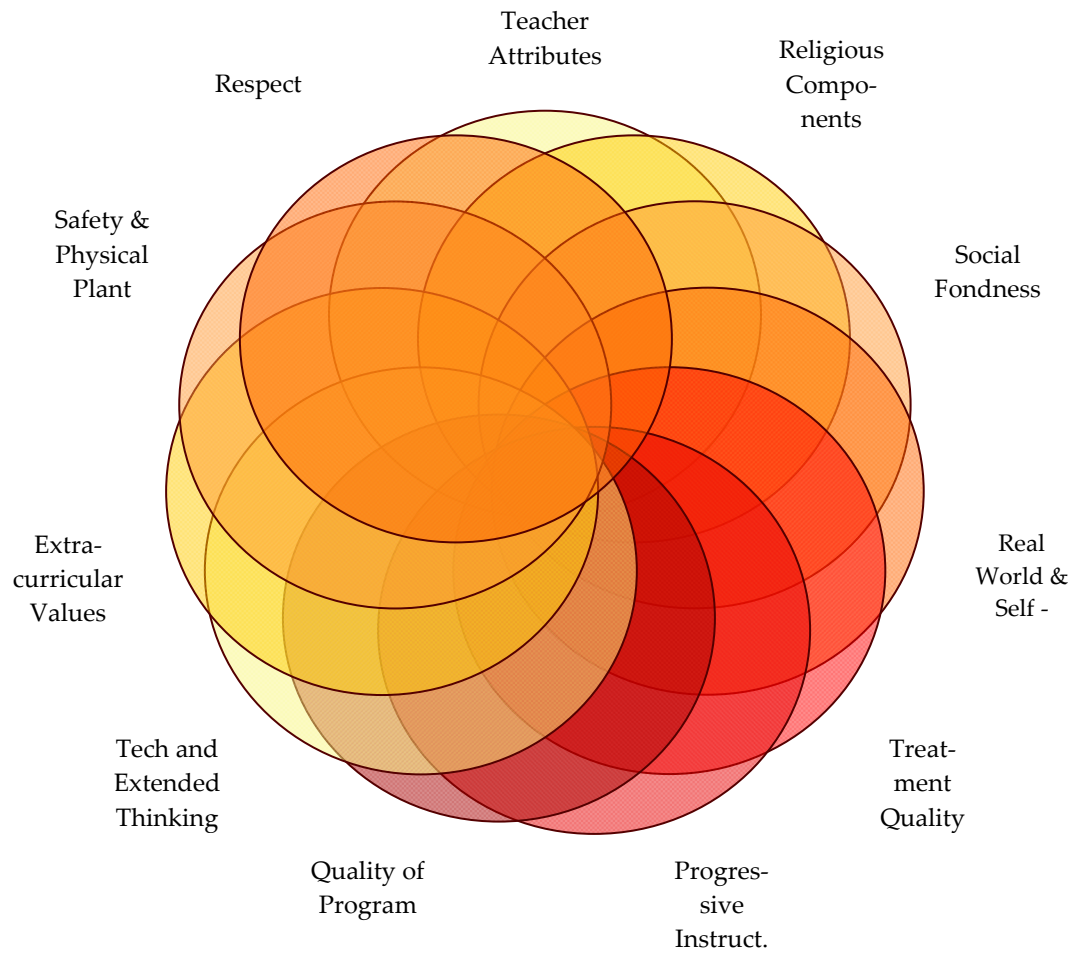
**Factor 11: Equity (5 items), Alpha .68**

- 21. There is an expectation at Cleveland Central Catholic High School that everyone - administration, faculty, staff, coaches and students - live and practice Catholic/Christian values
- 84. The variety of club offerings at Cleveland Central Catholic High School accommodate the needs and interests of the students.
- 91. All sports are treated equally at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- 92. Cleveland Central Catholic High School offers equal opportunity for both boys and girls in sports.
- 93. Sports and academics are in balance with each other at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
Factor 1: Teacher Attributes	(15 items)	alpha .90
Factor 2: Religious Components	(13 items)	alpha .85
Factor 3: School Fondness	(5 items)	alpha .85
Factor 4: Respect	(4 items)	alpha .77
Factor 5: Safety and Physical Plant	(6 items)	alpha .75
Factor 6: Technology and Extended Thinking	(6 items)	alpha .71
Factor 7: Quality of Program	(4 items)	alpha .70
Factor 8: Progressive Instruction	(6 items)	alpha .72
Factor 9: Real World & Self-Efficacy	(5 items)	alpha .66
Factor 10: Extracurricular Values	(4 items)	alpha .69
Factor 11: Treatment Equity	(5 items)	alpha .68

## APPENDIX D

### 2004 Model of 11-Factors Composite of School Climate (Hollis, 2006)



Source: Hollis (2006).

## APPENDIX E

### The School Philosophy of Cleveland Central Catholic High School (1998)

We believe . . .

- A Catholic school is a Christian community, grounded in the Catholic faith, Christ's mandate to proclaim the Gospel and to establish the reign of God.
- A Christian community is a group of people of diverse backgrounds joined in like purpose, hope, and love who seek to share with others their experiences and lives.
- The family is the primary teacher and an essential partner in the student's formation.
- All students can learn. We provide the appropriate instructional activities, a supportive and nurturing environment and comprehensive curriculum so that all students learn.
- Education is a process of holistic development, strengthening and enriching each person's unique gifts and talents to grow spiritually, development academically and physically, mature personally, think critically, and live creatively.
- Education in a diverse community offers unique<sup>88</sup> opportunities. It inspires justice, compassion, respect for the dignity of others and an appreciation for and celebration of differences.
- All people are called to the service of others for their own development and in response to Christ's call to "love one another as I have loved you."

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<sup>88</sup> My draft of the school philosophy was accepted in its entirety with the sole change of "unique." My draft originally read "superior opportunities." After considerable discussion within various committees, the majority voted to make the change.

## APPENDIX F

### Cleveland Area OGT Results for 2007

#### OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OHIO GRADUATION TESTS - PRELIMINARY RESULTS GRADE 10, MARCH 2007 TEST ADMINISTRATION

CLEVELAND MUNICIPAL SD							
Subject	Number Tested	% Prof. or Above	% Adv.	% Accel.	% Prof.	% Basic	% Limited
Reading	3630	67.4	2.3	13.4	51.7	19.6	13.1
Math	3683	47.2	4.9	10.3	32.0	28.0	24.8
Writing	3515	76.2	0.2	22.7	53.3	16.8	7.0
Science	3691	35.4	3.5	8.1	23.8	38.6	26.1
Soc. St.	3620	39.8	4.8	7.6	27.3	23.2	37.1
All Five	3367	25.8					

Source: [http://webapp1.ode.state.oh.us/proficiency\\_reports/ogt/csvtoasp.asp?filename=March\\_2007\\_OGT\\_Nonpublic.csv&county=cuyahoga](http://webapp1.ode.state.oh.us/proficiency_reports/ogt/csvtoasp.asp?filename=March_2007_OGT_Nonpublic.csv&county=cuyahoga)

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF CLEVELAND							
Subject	Number Tested	% Prof. or Above	% Adv.	% Accel.	% Prof.	% Basic	% Limited
Reading	3412	98.8	23	45.3	30.4	0.9	0.3
Math	3412	94.7	42.5	28.1	24.1	3.9	1.4
Writing	3406	99.2	1.9	80.6	16.7	0.8	0.1
Science	3405	89	33.9	28.6	26.5	9.9	1.2
Soc. St.	3408	92.5	39.6	24.4	28.6	5.6	1.9
All Five	3386	85					

Source: [http://webapp1.ode.state.oh.us/proficiency\\_reports/ogt/csvtoasp.asp?filename=March\\_2007\\_OGT\\_Nonpublic.csv&county=cuyahoga](http://webapp1.ode.state.oh.us/proficiency_reports/ogt/csvtoasp.asp?filename=March_2007_OGT_Nonpublic.csv&county=cuyahoga)

CLEVELAND CENTRAL CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL							
Subject	Number Tested	% Prof. or Above (% w/o IEPs)	% Adv.	% Accel.	% Prof.	% Basic	% Limited
Reading	127	88 (97)	6	32	50	5	7
Math	127	64 (69)	5	17	42	20	17
Writing	127	89 (97)	0	39	50	9	2
Science	127	51 (57)	5	18	28	38	12
Soc. St.	127	68 (78)	9	18	41	18	13
All Five	127	41					

Source: Compiled from School Records

## APPENDIX G

### 2007 Student Questionnaire

#### Cleveland Central Catholic Student Questionnaire

May 23, 2007

**Orientation:** Every five years or so, schools go through an evaluation process that is part of their membership in the North Central Accreditation organization. Additionally, some friends of the school have recently posed some interesting questions. In order to improve our school, plan for the future, and understand your needs better, we need your input. That is the purpose of this questionnaire: to get your feedback on our school and some thoughts in general. I also sometimes use this material for work and study I do at Cleveland State University. Therefore, I am asking everyone to take the time to respond to this questionnaire during homeroom today, Wednesday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>. It should take you about 25 minutes to complete. It is divided into two sections: Part 1—About You and Your Background and Part 2—About Your Opinions.

This questionnaire is confidential. Students are only identified by a code number. The name page is attached only to see that you get your questionnaire during homeroom. When you finish the questionnaire, please remove the name page. Your name will never appear on the questionnaire—only the code number will appear. I will be the only person to know the identity of each code number. The code number will be used only in an effort to coordinate information. Your responses will never appear by themselves; they will only be used when summed with other responses. Your name will never be attached to the questionnaire. Your input, answers, opinions, and information will be kept absolutely confidential.

To thank you for your time and effort, I will raffle off coupons for items from the snack bar in the cafeteria during lunch periods on Friday. Good luck! Thank you for your time!! --Mr. Hollis, Co-Chairperson, North Central Accreditation Association Committee

**Directions:** There are two types of items: information and opinion. For the Information Section, check the box or fill in the blank with the information that applies to you. Afterwards, there will be a large number of statements. I want to know your opinion on each statement. Again, please do not put your name on the questionnaire. I want you to feel comfortable answering with your true feelings and thoughts. I will be the only person to read the individual results, but I will use the code number and not your name. I will not do any of that work until the summer. When you finish, please return your work to the classroom teacher. Thanks again!

**Part 1: Information about You and Your Background. Answer the following as it relates to you and your background and experience.**

1. I am a student in: (Place a check in the appropriate box.)

☐ Grade 9                      ☐ Grade 10                      ☐ Grade 11                      ☐ Grade 12

2. I am (Place a check in the appropriate box.):

☐ Male                      ☐ female

3. How often do you speak English at home?

☐ Always                      ☐ Almost Always                      ☐ Sometimes                      ☐ Rarely                      ☐ Never

4. Please circle the grades you have been at Cleveland Central Catholic (including this year):

9                      10                      11                      12

5. I get to school by (your main way of getting to school):

☐ Walking  
☐ Riding the RTA  
☐ Riding on the school's bus  
☐ Driving or getting a ride (parent or car pool)  
☐ Other. If other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

6. My ethnic background is (select one):

☐ White  
☐ Black (non-Hispanic)  
☐ Hispanic  
☐ Native American  
☐ Asian  
☐ Pacific Islander  
☐ Multiracial; please specify \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Other; please specify \_\_\_\_\_

7. My faith tradition/Church background is (select one):

☐ Catholic  
☐ Christian (non-Catholic, e.g., Protestant, Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, etc.)  
☐ Non-Christian tradition  
☐ Other; please specify \_\_\_\_\_



8. On the average each night, I spend the following amount of time on homework (select one):

- ☐ 30 minutes or less
- ☐ More than 30 minutes but less than 1 hour
- ☐ Between 1 and 2 hours
- ☐ Between 2 and 3 hours
- ☐ More than 3 hours

9. Each week in a job outside home, I work the following number of hours (select one):

- ☐ Under 5 hours
- ☐ Between 5 and 10 hours
- ☐ Between 10 and 20 hours
- ☐ Between 20 and 30 hours
- ☐ More than 30 hours
- ☐ None—I don't have a job

10. I have been issued a card for free lunches? ☐ Yes ☐ no

11. I have been issued a card for reduced lunches? ☐ Yes ☐ no

12. I have Mrs. Albanese or Mrs. Posladek for English? ☐ Yes ☐ no

13. I have Mrs. Sroka for reading? ☐ Yes ☐ no

14. I have Mrs. Somrak for math? ☐ Yes ☐ no

15. I have classes with Mr. Williams or Schabitzer? ☐ Yes ☐ no

16. Please circle the years/grades of school that you were in Catholic schools (including Central Catholic):

K    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10    11    12

17. How many of your friends have/will graduate from high school?

- ☐ All
- ☐ Most
- ☐ About Half
- ☐ Few
- ☐ None

18. Among members of your family, how many have/will graduate from high school?

- ☐ All
- ☐ Most
- ☐ About Half
- ☐ Few
- ☐ None

19. Were you born in the US or Puerto Rico? ☐ Yes ☐ No If no, where? \_\_\_\_\_

20. Was your father born in the US or Puerto Rico? ☐ Yes ☐ No If no, where? \_\_\_\_\_

21. Was your mother born in the US or Puerto Rico? ☐ Yes ☐ No If no, where? \_\_\_\_\_

22. I live (select one)

- ☐ with my mother and father
- ☐ with my mother
- ☐ with my father
- ☐ with my grandmother, aunt, or other relative
- ☐ with another to whom I am not related by blood
- ☐ other; please specify \_\_\_\_\_

23. My mom has (check all that apply):

- ☐ Graduated from grade school
- ☐ Earned a GED
- ☐ Graduated from high school
- ☐ Graduated from a 2-year college
- ☐ Graduated from a 4-year college
- ☐ Graduated from Specialized training, e.g., vocational school, Police Academy, apprenticeship.
- ☐ Served in the Military
- ☐ I don't know.

24. My dad has (check all that apply):

- ☐ Graduated from grade school
- ☐ Earned a GED
- ☐ Graduated from high school
- ☐ Graduated from a 2-year college
- ☐ Graduated from a 4-year college
- ☐ Graduated from Specialized training, e.g., Police Academy; please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Served in the Military
- ☐ I don't know.

25. What do you think your grade average is (select one)?

- ☐ Mainly A's
- ☐ Mainly B's
- ☐ Mainly C's
- ☐ Mainly D's

26. What do you plan to do after high school (select one)?

- ☐ Go to work full time (right away)
- ☐ Go to a short term training (less than one-year)
- ☐ Go to medium length training (about 2 years)
- ☐ Go to a college and obtain a bachelor's degree (4 years)
- ☐ Go to a college and graduate school (5 to 7 years)
- ☐ Go to a college and profession school, e.g., law school, medical school (7 or more years)
- ☐ Other; please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Don't know

27. I attend church or religious services (select one):

- ☐ Once or more per week (not including school)  
☐ 2 or 3 times per month (not including school)  
☐ 3 to 5 times per half year (not including school)  
☐ About 2 times per year (not including school)  
☐ Only while at school  
☐ Other; please specify \_\_\_\_\_

28. Are you involved in Sports at CCC? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, which ones \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

29. Are you involved in clubs at CCC? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, which ones \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

30. Did you go to Head Start before Kindergarten? ☐ Yes ☐ No

31. Did you go to Preschool or Day Care before starting elementary school? ☐ Yes ☐ No

## Part II: Opinions about Cleveland Central Catholic High School

Respond to the following statements as to how much you think the statement is false or true. For example, if the statement is "Cleveland Central Catholic's cafeteria has the best food in the world," you will rate that statement between Definitely False and Definitely True by circling the number on the scale below:

	<i>1—Definitely False</i>	<i>2—False</i>	<i>3—More False Than True</i>	<i>4—More True than False</i>	<i>5— True</i>	<i>6—Definitely True</i>
	Definitely False	False	More False than True	More True than False	True	Definitely True
32 I feel safe at Cleveland Central Catholic High School	1	2	3	4	5	6
33 Even if the class work is hard, I can learn it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34 I feel like I belong at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35 I feel challenged to achieve academically and personally at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.	1	2	3	4	5	6
36 Cleveland Central Catholic High School is preparing me well for what I want to do after high school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
37 I am treated with respect by teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
38 I understand how to apply what I learned at Cleveland Central Catholic High School to real-life situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6
39 I am treated with respect by the staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
40 I am treated with respect by other students at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.	1	2	3	4	5	6

		Definitely False	False	More False than True	More True than False	True	Definitely True
41	Students respect other students of different abilities and talents at Cleveland Central Catholic.	1	2	3	4	5	6
42	Students demonstrate acceptance of anyone who is different from themselves.	1	2	3	4	5	6
43	There is an expectation at Cleveland Central Catholic High School that everyone - administration, faculty, staff, coaches and students - live and practice Catholic/Christian values	1	2	3	4	5	6
44	Cleveland Central Catholic High School's mission and philosophy are understood well.	1	2	3	4	5	6
45	The retreat program at Cleveland Central Catholic High School has made a difference in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
46	Students are more involved in Christian service because of Cleveland Central Catholic High School's service projects and requirements.	1	2	3	4	5	6
47	The people most responsible for what I learn are my teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
48	School is fun at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.	1	2	3	4	5	6
49	I like Cleveland Central Catholic High School.	1	2	3	4	5	6
50	I think Cleveland Central Catholic High School is a good school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
51	I like the students at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.	1	2	3	4	5	6

		Definitely False	False	More False than True	More True than False	True	Definitely True
52	Participating in extracurricular activities is important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
53	Students at Cleveland Central Catholic High School respect other students who are different than they are	1	2	3	4	5	6
54	Theology class is seen as important by the teachers of Cleveland Central Catholic High School.	1	2	3	4	5	6
55	Theology class is seen as important by the students at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.	1	2	3	4	5	6
56	Students of Cleveland Central Catholic High School obtain a good understanding of the Catholic/Christian faith.	1	2	3	4	5	6
57	Cleveland Central Catholic High School is preparing students to be good Christians and religious people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
58	Theology classes at Cleveland Central Catholic High School help me to pray and develop a deeper spiritual life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
59	The school masses and prayer services are helpful and meaningful for the students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
60	At Cleveland Central Catholic High School students have the opportunity to talk to adults about their beliefs and values.	1	2	3	4	5	6
61	Religious activities are given a priority at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.	1	2	3	4	5	6
62	My teachers expect students to do their best.	1	2	3	4	5	6

		Definitely False	False	More False than True	More True than False	True	Definitely True
63	My teachers are understanding when students have personal problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6
64	My teachers set high standards for achievement in their classes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
65	My teachers have confidence in me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
66	My teachers know me well.	1	2	3	4	5	6
67	My teachers listen to my ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6
68	My teachers care about me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
69	My teachers make learning fun.	1	2	3	4	5	6
70	My teachers give me individual attention when I need it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
71	My teachers use a variety of activities each day during the class period.	1	2	3	4	5	6
72	My teachers challenge me to do better.	1	2	3	4	5	6
73	Most of my tests at Cleveland Central Catholic High School contain essay or short answer questions where I have to explain my thinking.	1	2	3	4	5	6
74	My tests contain a majority of objective questions (for example, true and false and multiple-choice tests).	1	2	3	4	5	6
75	Most of my classes are interesting.	1	2	3	4	5	6
76	I am ready for the real world in my ability to write.	1	2	3	4	5	6
77	I am ready for the real world in my ability to do mathematics.	1	2	3	4	5	6

		Definitely False	False	More False than True	More True than False	True	Definitely True
78	I am ready for the real world in my ability to present information or give a talk.	1	2	3	4	5	6
79	Most of my classes are giving me a foundation for future skills I will need.	1	2	3	4	5	6
80	I am taking or plan to take more than the required number of technology/computer classes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
81	The computer classes at Cleveland Central Catholic High School meet my needs as a student.	1	2	3	4	5	6
82	The availability of computers at Cleveland Central Catholic High School meets my needs as a student.	1	2	3	4	5	6
83	Computer classes at Cleveland Central Catholic High School are challenging.	1	2	3	4	5	6
84	As a result of taking technology courses at Cleveland Central Catholic High School, I feel confident using computer technology.	1	2	3	4	5	6
85	In my classes, time is spent listening to the teacher talk.	1	2	3	4	5	6
86	In my classes, time is spent in whole-class discussions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
87	In my classes, time is spent working in small groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6
88	In most of my classes, time is spent reading.	1	2	3	4	5	6
89	In my classes, time is spent answering questions from a book or worksheet.	1	2	3	4	5	6



		Definitely False	False	More False than True	More True than False	True	Definitely True
90	In my classes, time is spent working on projects or research.	1	2	3	4	5	6
91	In my classes, time is spent doing work that I find meaningful.	1	2	3	4	5	6
92	In my classes, teachers are comfortable using technology/computers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
93	I work well when I am working on projects or research.	1	2	3	4	5	6
94	I work well when the teacher is leading a discussion with the whole class.	1	2	3	4	5	6
95	I work well when I am working by myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6
96	School social activities are fun and help me make friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6
97	The variety of club offerings at Cleveland Central Catholic High School meets the needs and interests of the students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
98	The sports program helps achieve the goals of Cleveland Central Catholic High School.	1	2	3	4	5	6
99	The sports program at Cleveland Central Catholic meets the needs and interests of students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
100	I participate in school sports' team(s) at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.	1	2	3	4	5	6
101	Sports at Central Catholic form teamwork and friendship, self-discipline and self-confidence.	1	2	3	4	5	6
102	All sports are treated equally at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.	1	2	3	4	5	6

		Definitely False	False	More False than True	More True than False	True	Definitely True
103	Central Catholic offers equal opportunities for both boys and girls in sports.	1	2	3	4	5	6
104	Sports and academics are in balance with each other at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.	1	2	3	4	5	6
105	I can do even the hardest work in classes if I try.	1	2	3	4	5	6
106	I like class work that I'll learn from even if I make a lot of mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
107	I would feel really good if I were the only one who could answer the teacher's questions in class.	1	2	3	4	5	6
108	It's very important to me that I don't look dumb in class.	1	2	3	4	5	6
109	An important reason I do my class work is that I don't embarrass myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6
110	I do my class work because I am interested in it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
111	Doing better than other students in class is important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
112	It is important to me that I look smart compared to others in class.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Thank you very, very much!

## APPENDIX H

### 2007 Definition of Variable

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1. Percent of Cath. Ed.	Total Number Years/Grade Level
2. GPA	Cumulative GPA based on 2, 4, 6, & 8 Semesters for 9 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , & 12 <sup>th</sup> Grs, respectively
3. OGT: Writing in 10 Gr.	Dummy variable (=1) if Passed, 0 otherwise
4. OGT: Reading in 10 Gr.	Dummy variable (=1) if Passed, 0 otherwise
5. OGT: Math in 10 Gr.	Dummy variable (=1) if Passed, 0 otherwise
6. OGT: Science in 10 Gr.	Dummy variable (=1) if Passed, 0 otherwise
7. OGT: Soc. Sts. in 10 Gr.	Dummy variable (=1) if Passed, 0 otherwise
8. Gender	Dummy variable (=1) if male, 0 otherwise
9. Minority Status	Dummy variable (=1) if African American or Hispanic, 0 otherwise
10. Traditional 2 parent family	With Father & Mother (=4), With Mother (=3), With Father (=2), With Other Relative (=1), Non-relative (=0)
11. Religious Practice	Weekly (=5), 2-3 per Month (=4), 3-5 per 6 mos. (=3), 2x per Year. (=2), Only at School (=1)
12. Mother's Post HS Ed	Dummy variable (=1) if possess post-high school education, (=0) otherwise
13. Father's Post-HS Ed	Dummy variable (=1) if possess post-high school education, (=0) otherwise
14. Behavior Points	Total School Infraction Points for 2006-2007
15. Absences	Total Number of Absences for 2006-2007
16. Sports Participation	Dummy variable (=1) if participates in extracurricular sports, 0 otherwise
17. Club Participation	Dummy variable (=1) if participates in extracurricular clubs, 0 otherwise
18. Family Graduating from Catholic School	All (=4), Most (=3), About Half (=2), Few (=1), None (=0)
19. Friends in Catholic Ed.	All (=4), Most (=3), About Half (=2), Few (=1), None (=0)

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20. Climate: Teachers Affect & Care	Definitely True (=6), True (=5), More True than False (=4), More False than True (=3), False (=2), Definitely False (=1)
21. Climate: Faith/Values	Definitely True (=6), True (=5), More True than False (=4), More False than True (=3), False (=2), Definitely False (=1)
22. Climate: Community	Definitely True (=6), True (=5), More True than False (=4), More False than True (=3), False (=2), Definitely False (=1)
23. Climate: Respect	Definitely True (=6), True (=5), More True than False (=4), More False than True (=3), False (=2), Definitely False (=1)

---

## APPENDIX I

### 2007Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Catholic School Climate

#### **Factor 1: Teacher's Caring (11 items)—Cronbach's Alpha .92**

- 37. I am treated with respect by teachers.
- 39. I am treated with respect by the staff.
- 62. My teachers expect students to do their best.
- 63. My teachers are understanding when students have personal problems.
- 64. My teachers set high standards for achievement in their classes.
- 65. My teachers have confidence in me.
- 66. My teachers know me well.
- 67. My teachers listen to my ideas.
- 68. My teachers care about me.
- 69. My teachers make learning fun.
- 70. My teachers give me individual attention when I need it.

#### **Factor 2: School Faith and Values (12 items)—Cronbach's Alpha .90**

- 43. There is an expectation at Cleveland Central Catholic High School that everyone - administration, faculty, staff, coaches and students - live and practice Catholic/Christian values
- 44. Cleveland Central Catholic High School's mission and philosophy are understood well.
- 45. The retreat program at Cleveland Central Catholic High School has made a difference in my life.
- 46. Students are more involved in Christian service because of Cleveland Central Catholic High School's service projects and requirements.
- 54. Theology class is seen as important by the teachers of Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- 55. Theology class is seen as important by the students at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- 56. Students of Cleveland Central Catholic High School obtain a good understanding of the Catholic/Christian faith.
- 57. Cleveland Central Catholic High School is preparing students to be good Christians and religious people.
- 58. Theology classes at Cleveland Central Catholic High School help me to pray and develop a deeper spiritual life.
- 59. The school masses and prayer services are helpful and meaningful for the students.
- 60. At Cleveland Central Catholic High School students have the opportunity to talk to adults about their beliefs and values.
- 61. Religious activities are given a priority at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.

**Factor 3: School Community (6 items)—Cronbach's Alpha .89**

- 34. I feel like I belong at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- 48. School is fun at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- 49. I like Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- 50. I think Cleveland Central Catholic High School is a good school.
- 51. I like the students at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- 96. School social activities are fun and help me make friends.

**Factor 4: School Respect (5 items)—Cronbach's Alpha .82**

- 32. I feel safe at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- 40. I am treated with respect by other students at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- 41. Students respect other students of different abilities and talents at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.
- 42. Students demonstrate acceptance of anyone who is different from themselves.
- 53. Students at Cleveland Central Catholic High School respect other students who are different than they are.

**Deleted Items:**

- 52. Participating in extracurricular activities is important to me.
- 72. My teachers challenge me to do better.

## APPENDIX J

### Administrative Approval to Access Data



#### Cleveland Central Catholic High School

6550 Baxter Avenue Cleveland, OH 44105

216 441-4700 (phone) 216 441-8353 (fax) [www.centralcatholichs.org](http://www.centralcatholichs.org)

December 13, 2007

Dear Members of Lanny K. Hollis's Dissertation Committee and the Institutional Review Board at Cleveland State University,

This letter is to acknowledge my agreement to allow Doctoral Candidate Lanny K. Hollis access to our school improvement plan and accreditation database for the student body. This database is totally anonymous; all names and personal identifiers will be eliminated. It is understood that Lanny will maintain the confidentiality of these anonymous student surveys and demographic and academic items.

Additionally, Lanny has my permission to access our student's alumni records so as to invite a number of our alumni to serve as members of a focus group to discuss their experience of Catholic education and time at Cleveland Central Catholic High School.

Lanny Hollis is a long-term and trusted member of the faculty of Cleveland Central Catholic High School and employee of the Diocese of Cleveland. We wish him well in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Karl Ertle, M.A.

President/Principal

ROOTED IN GOSPEL  
VALUES AND  
CATHOLIC TRADITION  
CLEVELAND CENTRAL  
CATHOLIC HIGH  
SCHOOL EDUCATES  
CULTURALLY DIVERSE  
YOUNG MEN AND  
WOMEN OF OUR CITY  
AND CHALLENGES  
THEM TO DEEPEN  
THEIR FAITH TO  
RESPONSIBLY SERVE  
GOD, CHURCH  
AND COMMUNITY.

## APPENDIX K

### Institution Review Board Documentation and Approval




## Cleveland State University

College of Graduate Studies and Research  
Office of Sponsored Programs and Research  
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

# Memorandum

To: Karl Wheatley  
Teacher Education

From: Blake Hodges  
Institutional Review Board  
Office of Sponsored Programs & Research 

Date: 5 September 2008

Re: Results of IRB Review of your project number: 28266-WHE-HS  
Co-Investigator: Lanny Hollis  
**Entitled: Catholic Schools and Student Academic Performance: Does the Urban Catholic School Experience Mitigate Racial Disparity?**

The IRB has reviewed and approved your application for the above named project, under the category noted below. Approval for use of human subjects in this research is for one year from the approval date listed below. If your study extends beyond this approval period, please contact this office to initiate an annual review of the project. ***This approval expires at 11:59 pm on 9/03/2009.***

By accepting this decision, you agree to notify the IRB of: (1) any additions to or changes in procedures for your study that modify the subjects' risk in any way; and (2) any events that affect that safety or well-being of subjects.

Thank you for your efforts to maintain compliance with the federal regulations for the protection of human subjects.

---

**Approval Category:****Date: 09/4/2008**

Exempt Status: Project is exempt from further review under 45 CFR 46.101 (b)(2)

**X** Expedited Review: Project approved, Expedited Category 7

Regular IRB Approval

cc: Project file

*Mailing Address:* 2121 Euclid Avenue, KB 1150 • Cleveland, Ohio 44115-2214  
*Campus Location:* Keith Building, Room 1150 • 1621 Euclid Avenue • Cleveland, Ohio  
(216) 687-3630 • Fax (216) 687-9382



# Cleveland State University

Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects in Research  
Application for Project Review

## I. Title Page

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 07/10/2008

Transaction Number (office use only): 28266-WHE-HS

Project Title: CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: DOES THE URBAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL EXPERIENCE MITIGATE RACIAL DISPARITY?

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR OR ADVISOR

Name: (Last, First): Wheatley, Karl

Title: Assoc./Assist. Professor

Department: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Campus Address: Rhodes Tower 1329

Electronic Mail Address: K.WHEATLEY@CSUOHIO.EDU

Office Phone: (216) 687-4592

Home Phone: ( )

Has the investigator completed the CITI course in the protection of human subjects? ☒ Yes ☐ No

CO-PRINCIPAL OR STUDENT INVESTIGATOR

Name: (Last, First): Hollis, Lanny

Title: Student

Department: Education

Electronic Mail Address: LKHollis@aol.com

Office Phone: (216) 647-8501

Home Phone: (216) 647-8501

Has the investigator completed the CITI course in the protection of human subjects? ☒ Yes ☐ No

If this is a student investigator, please indicate status:

☐ Undergraduate

☐ Master level student

☒ Doctoral level student

and level of involvement in the research:

☐ Assisting Faculty Research

☐ Thesis

☒ Dissertation

☐ Classroom project: Class name/number \_\_\_\_\_

PROPOSED PROJECT DURATION (research may not begin prior to IRB approval):

From (mm/dd/yyyy): 05/01/2008

to (mm/dd/yyyy):

03/15/2009 (date following anticipated approval maximum one year later)

Please be aware! 1-677-647-8501 to approval or outside of authorized dates may not be used. If your study (i.e. collection of data) will extend beyond the one year authorization, it is your responsibility to notify the IRB prior to expiration and request an extension.

### Initial Evaluation

☐ Approve as is

☐ Requires Revision before evaluation or final action

☐ Full IRB review required

### Final IRB Action

☐ Exempt Status: Project is exempt under 45 CFR 46.101

☒ Expedited Review: Approval Category 7

☐ Regular IRB approval

☐ Other:

Reviewer: George Anetony Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Approval Date: 7/4/08

Cleveland State University Office of Sponsored Programs and Research IRB  
Form updated 11/30/2007  
All other forms are obsolete  
dpo

RECEIVED

JUL 31 2008

OFFICE OF SPONSORED  
PROGRAMS & RESEARCH

## APPENDIX L

### Consent Letter for Focus Group Participation

Dear Alumnus/a:

My name is Lanny Hollis, and I am a doctoral student at Cleveland State University completing my dissertation under the direction of Dr. Karl Wheatley. I am currently researching the experience of Catholic education and academic performance.

In an attempt to understand any special impact that Catholic education has on academic performance, I am asking you to share your academic experience. Your input and insights are important to this process. Accordingly, I am inviting you to participate in a short discussion (group focus group/interview) with me, which will last approximately one hour. I will ask a series of questions based on your experience at Central or at other schools. There are no right or wrong answers, only those which are based on your experience. There should be no risks beyond that experience during everyday life for participating in this research. The discussion will be recorded on audio-tape so I can write down the comments later, but any comment you make will not identify you by name. Discussants will be coded only by gender, race, and graduation year. Your name and participation will be kept confidential and only known to the participants in the group. Accordingly, I ask that you maintain the confidentiality of what is said here, though I cannot guarantee something said might not be repeated. The recorded tape will be kept secure in the administrative office and will be destroyed as soon as possible after the completion of this project. As your participation in this project is strictly voluntary, you may withdraw at any time. Additionally, you are free to share comments on any questions. Participants will not be asked specifically to share on any questions. You can also simply state that you "pass". If anything discussed bothers you, please stay after the group meeting so we can debrief and discuss it.

For any further information regarding this research or to contact me, please call me at (216) 647-8501, or my advisor Dr. Karl Wheatley at (216) 687-4592. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant you may contact the Cleveland State University Institutional Review Board at (216) 687-3630.

Please indicate your agreement to participate by checking the appropriate response and signing below.

- ☐ I am 18 years or older and have read and understood this consent form and agree to participate.
- ☐ I do not wish to participate in this research project.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please Print)

There are two copies of this letter (After signing them, keep one copy for your records, and return the other one to me). Thank you in advance for your cooperation. Mr. Hollis

## APPENDIX M

### Focus Group Basic Semi-Structured Questions and Data Summary

#### **Alumni Focus Group—Semi-Structured Questions Catholic Schools and Student Academic Performance: Does the Urban Catholic School Experience Mitigate Racial Disparity? Lanny K. Hollis, PhD Cand.**

Introduction to the research to participation, the research, and the statistical indications (reverse side):

1. Within the United States, there is a difference in academic achievement between Whites and members of minorities. Why do you think that is? These academic differences between the races are less in Catholic schools. Why do you think that is?
2. What has been the most important factor(s) in your academic achievement? What has been the most significant limitation(s) or challenge(s) to you achieving academically?

#### **Note the Following Predictors of Academic Achievement (Regression)**

##### **What predicts a Higher GPA?**

1. Low number of detentions
2. Participation in school clubs
3. Having more friends who are like to be high school graduates
4. Being a girl

##### **What Predicts Higher results on the Science OGT?**

1. Low number of discipline points
2. Being Female
3. Having more graduation-minded friends
4. Higher participation in school clubs
5. Higher participation in school sports
6. Having a higher opinions of Teaching Caring
7. Having lower opinion of the school's religiosity

##### **What Predicts higher results on the Math OGT?**

1. Having more friends who are like to be high school graduates
2. Lower number of discipline points
3. Having lower opinion of the school's religiosity
4. Having a higher opinions of Teaching Caring
5. Higher participation in school clubs

##### **Note the Factors did not predict the above Achievement Levels:**

1. Race and ethnicity
2. Family income
3. Two-parent family structure
4. Mother's or father's education
5. Length of Catholic education
6. Attendance Record

3. How would you discuss the treatment of race within your experience of Catholic education? What role does race have to do with academic achievement?

Based on this discussion, would you like to add any comments.

**Focus Group Data of Variables, May 2007 (Academic Year 2006-2007), page 2**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Total Mean n=414</b>	<b>White Mean n = 101</b>	<b>Black Mean n=258</b>	<b>Hispanic Mean n=55</b>	<b>Chi-Square difference between groups</b>
Students	414	101	258	55	n.s.
Catholic Denomination	169 (41%)	90 (90%)	30 (12%)	49 (89%)	** .000
Mother's Post-HS Ed.	142 (39%)	20 (23%)	103 (44%)	19 (40%)	* .003
Father's Post-HS Ed.	104 (35%)	16 (22%)	73 (40%)	15 (35%)	* .024
Two-Parent Household	176 (44%)	59 (60%)	84 (34%)	33 (60%)	** .000
Participation in School Sports	215 (52%)	40 (40%)	151 (59%)	24 (44%)	* .002
Participation in School Clubs	142 (34%)	33 (33%)	92 (36%)	17 (31%)	n.s

\* p < .05

\*\* p < .001

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Total Mean n=414</b>	<b>White Mean n = 101</b>	<b>Black Mean n=258</b>	<b>Hispanic Mean n=55</b>	<b>ANOVA Groups Means</b>
Amount of Catholic Education	8%-100%	68%	81%	63%	67%	** .000
GPA	.525-4.2	2.51	2.58	2.42	2.68	*0.022
Writing OGT	343-487	420	421	420	420	n.s
Reading OGT	237-490	423	422	422	424	n.s
Math OGT	349-498	409	413	406	411	*.042
SS OGT	334-498	410	411	408	410	n.s
Science OGT	335-469	402	407	399	407	*.004
Family Income***	\$5,855-\$160,670	\$39,688	\$45,824	\$37021	\$42,588	*.012
Discipline Points	0-49	7.92	5.75	9.45	5.15	** .000
Days Absent	0-61.5	7.01	9.62	6.14	6.50	** .000
Religious service attendance	0-5	3.05	2.68	3.14	3.22	n.s
Family who are high school graduates	0-4	2.78	2.69	2.86	2.53	n.s
Graduation-minded friends	0-4	2.96	3.00	2.97	2.76	n.s
Teacher Caring	1-6	4.47	4.60	4.40	4.51	n.s
School Religiosity	1-6	4.08	4.01	4.11	4.05	n.s
Community Feelings	1-6	4.40	4.34	4.39	4.47	n.s
Respect	1-6	4.01	3.90	4.05	3.98	n.s

\* p > 0.05

\*\* p > .001

\*\*\* Mode: \$36,154; Median 32,171